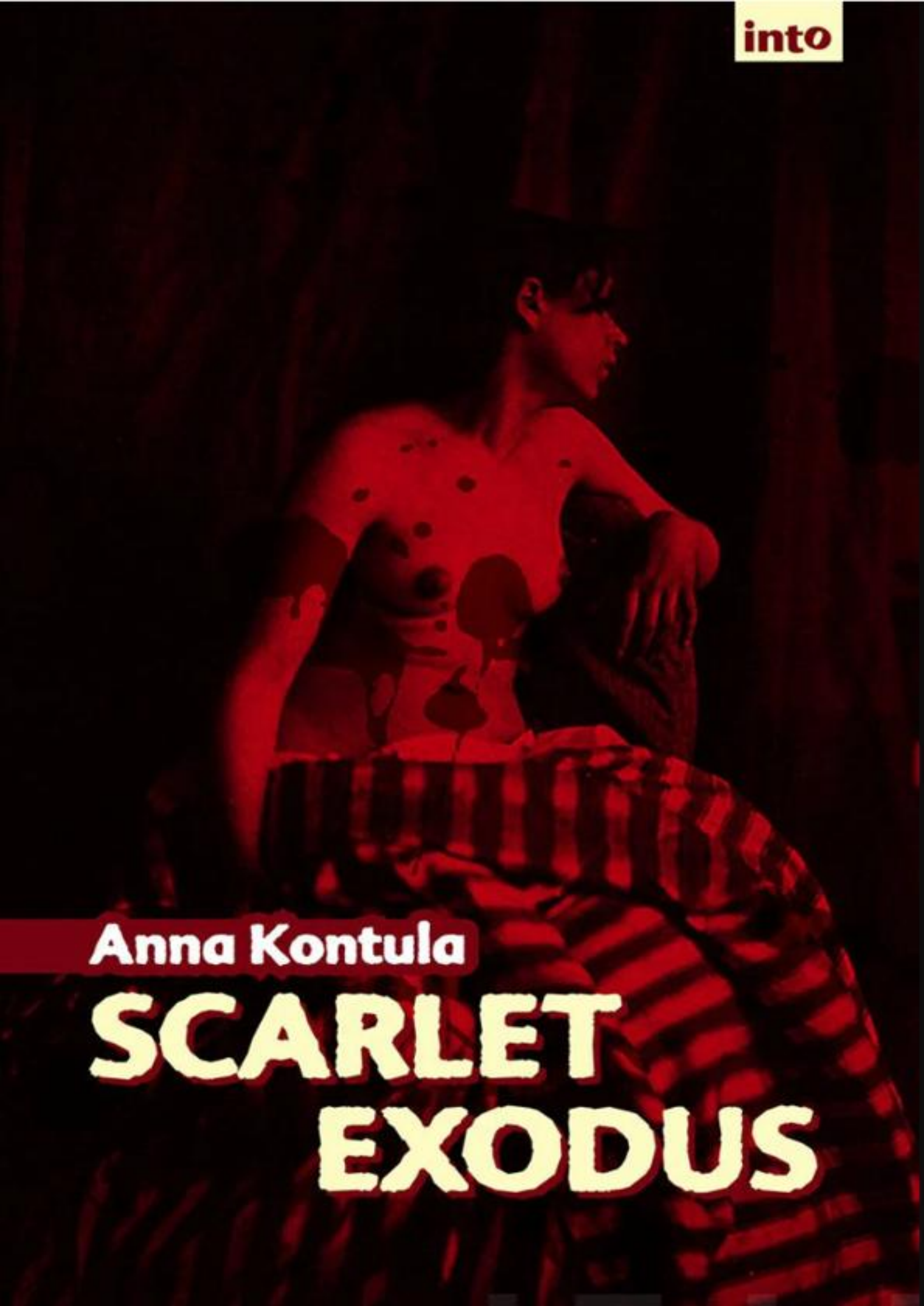
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Anna Kontula
SCARLET EXODUS

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Contents

Contents
Tables and figures
Acknowledgements

1. Introduction
- The early history of prostitution research
- Prostitution and the great sex wars
- Sex and social control
- Sex work research

2. Prostitution in Finland [21]
- Sex workers
- Kinds of sex work
- Client contact
- The risks of sex work
- Pimping
- Legislation

3. Stigma
- Whore myths
- Everyday stigmatization
- A double life
- Multiple peripheries
- Demarcations

4. Work
- Emotional work
- Setting limits
- Professional ethics
- Cost efficiency
- Precarity?

5. Sex
- To climax or not to climax?
- Care giving
- The route to sexual independence
- Tolerance
- Explicit rules
- The whoring urge

6. Control
- Force and free choice
- Client relations
- Birth of a sex worker
- Carnivalism
- Rebellion

7. Summary

Appendix Empirical material

References
Bibliography: Unpublished sources and internet sites
Published sources

Tables and figures

Table 1: Radical feminism's attitude to prostitution
Table 2: Estimates of the numbers of prostitutes operating in Finland
Table 3: How client contacts are established
Table 4: Interviewees' experience of otherness before starting and during sex work
Table 5: Constructing a theory within critical realism

Figure 1: The sex hierarchy: the magic circle and its perimeters
Figure 2: The sex hierarchy: the struggle over the boundaries between acceptable and reprehensible sex
Figure 3: Finnish prostitution in 2005 by duration of stay and degree of professionalism
Figure 4: The age distribution of prostitutes in Finland
Figure 5: Position in the sexual order and access to resources, according to Gail Pheterson

To all sex worker activists throughout the world who dare to believe in universal human rights – though there's still a long way to go.

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Anna Kontula
Tampere, 30 June 2010

1. Introduction

That night the people of Israel left Rameses and started for Succoth. There were about 600,000 men, plus all the women and children. Many people who were not Israelites went with them, along with the many flocks and herds. (Exodus 12, 37-38)

Why is it that in Finland sex is for sale? In trying to find an answer to this question I have met hundreds of sex workers and interviewed dozens of them. Though they include people who are brutally forced into sex work and, by contrast, others who are career sex workers, the metaphor that best describes the experience of most of them is that of an 'exodus'. The *Scarlet Exodus* thus encapsulates a problem: why do some women decide to sell sex by choice, or at least without being subject to any obvious coercion.

Exodus usually refers to the story in the Bible where the Israelites leave Egypt for the Promised Land. Though they had been subjects of the Pharaoh, their situation in Egypt had not been totally bleak. They had not been slaves, but had worked for overseers chosen from among their own people. They had owned a considerable amount of property and mingled successfully with the mainstream population. Later, in a moment of misgiving when they were in the desert, they longed for the fleshpots of Egypt. Thus, the reason for their exodus was not directly to do with survival, but rather the desire to live in complete freedom.

This is the first thread in the sex worker's story: the desire and opportunity to exchange a restricted and predictable life for one of personal autonomy. People in Finland do not end up selling sex due to dire poverty. International studies show that because of the risks entailed by sex work, those who take it up require fairly good baseline resources (Ruenkaew 2003, 114). The decision to take up sex work lies more in the realm of power than economics.

This is not to suggest, of course, that sex work is problem-free. The second thread concerns an understanding of sex work as a journey that has a beginning and an end, with setbacks or then days when even the sea itself seems to part for you. Like the Israelites of old, sex workers enjoy the protection of neither the state nor the authorities. Amidst the dangers of the wilderness, they have only divine protection (compare Kintula & Laakso, 2007) and their own resourcefulness to keep them from harm. The metaphor of a journey serves to underline the fact that in Finland sex work is more often than not undertaken only as a short-term career **[1]** and is located temporally, situationally, socially and symbolically somewhere else, far off from everyday life.

The third cohesive thread in this study concerns the agency of those making the journey. They may have had a domineering God, but the Israelites also followed a will of their own. Much of the research literature depicts prostitutes as passive victims, but after spending time with them I soon realized that sex workers are protagonists, just as the Israelites were: to the extent permitted by their circumstances, they actively strive for what is best. As interviewees, too, sex workers came across as anything but objects. They were prepared to commit themselves to lengthy interviews, and some were even prepared to comment on the initial draft of this study. It is for this reason that this book resonates with a spirit of emancipation and the viewpoints of sex workers themselves.

What, then, of the scarlet colour of this exodus? Clearly, it refers to the main protagonists of this book, because scarlet is the colour traditionally associated with selling sex, with the harlot. Roman Catholic paintings depict the Bible's best-known prostitute, Mary Magdalene, dressed in scarlet **[2]**. In the Middle Ages all sex workers were obliged to wear a scarlet bracelet so as not to be confused with respectable women (Niiranen 1986, 486). We hear of 'red collar workers' and in cities there are red light areas. Even as recently as the 1960s, Finnish prostitutes would wear red clothes to attract potential customers. Scarlet is the colour of whoredom.

Scarlet has another significance. In Christian art red clothing worn by a woman referred to sin, but on a man it symbolized high authority (Gardner 2006, 263). Why was it that the sexes were coded in such diametrically opposed ways? It was a woman's duty to obey, so was it intrinsically sinful and wrong for women to wear the insignia of power? Or did prostitution signify something that undermined the power structure of the Christian patriarchy?

The exodus is also scarlet because red is both the colour of power and resistance. It does not "refer merely to movement or to some expected promised land, but rather to a particular movement that transforms the field of power" (Termonen 2006, 329). One theme running throughout this book concerns the relationship between sex and power, with commercial sex marking the point where the two intersect.

We will begin by looking at the main concepts used in research on commercial sex and the current status of prostitution in Finland. In the third chapter I examine the history of this research in more detail and discuss the methodological challenges involved in efforts to explicate human experience, particularly that of marginal groups.

The first empirical chapter concerns social stigma, the most conspicuous feature of sex work. It is precisely because of the otherness and exclusion induced by that stigma that the motives for selling sex are particularly compelling. Why, we might wonder, would anyone want to make a living at such dire risk? I have described stigma as a gatekeeper that separates sex work from the mainstream of society and that blocks or distorts the passage of information between these two worlds. It also marks the point at which the journey begins, because the decision to take on one's first client is made in light of it.

When we look at selling sex in terms of the stigma attached to it, prostitution appears baffling, and yet from another angle we find that it has a sound inner logic. This is the core conclusion of this book and the structural basis of its chapters. The experience of sex work locates stigma, work, sex and agency as specific ways of understanding and actualizing the issue. They are intertwined in a sex worker's everyday life, forming a coherent whole. They also form a trajectory where selling sex is viewed by its practitioners purely as an incoming-generating activity, particularly early on in their career, while those who have been selling sex for a longer period see themselves as doing so largely in terms of sexuality. This trajectory comes full circle when those sex workers with the most experience assimilate sex work as part of their identity and start to consider how stigma limits their autonomy.

My main aim in this book is to delineate what sex workers themselves perceive as their main motivations for selling sex. There are also other angles on the sex trade, such as client-generated demand, but in this study they are situated as external conditions on the choices made by sex workers.

The early history of prostitution research

The discourse on prostitution typically swings from one extreme to the other, from moral panic to waning interest. Conflicts often occur amidst social, religious and economic changes, and the sexual norms that go with them are renegotiated. (Rubin 1984, 267-268.) Research also reflects the attitudes and question setting of the times. With the exception of some historians (Järvinen 1990; Häkkinen 1995), Finnish studies showed no interest in prostitution in past decades. The social upheavals of the 1990s made the issue conspicuous in a new way and at the turn of the millennium a number of studies appeared predominantly in the radical feminist tradition (e.g. Turunen 1996).

Prostitution studies are rooted in the medicalization of Western culture. Initially, at least, their purpose was to produce information to help control public health hazards. **[3]** A classic in this tradition is Cesare Lombroso's *The Criminal Woman and the Prostitute* (1885), according to which one could detect promiscuity from the shape of a woman's skull. Even a century ago, it was widely thought that Africans were more in touch with their sexuality and therefore better suited for commercial sex (Collins 1991, 167-170). The advent of AIDS in the 1980s saw a resurgence of medical research concerning sex. **[4]**

Likewise, the pathologization of prostitution has a long history. Research was based on the premise that women who exchange sex for money have an abnormal psyche. They have been designated variously as being frigid, nymphomaniacs, retarded, drug addicts, neurotics or then disturbed in other respects. Poverty was long regarded as a purely symbolic motive for selling sex. (Ryan 1997, 21-29; Sloan & Wahab 2000, 460; Bell 1994, 66-70.) As with fear of sexually transmitted diseases, assumptions concerning dysfunctional behaviour pervaded research (e.g. Silbert & Pines 1981; Weisberg 1985; Farley etc. 2003, 34, 58).

Alongside the medicalization tradition, another typical feature of prostitution research has been the 'victim perspective', which is no longer rooted in biological factors but in those of personal history and environment. Lurking behind the victim perspective is the assumption that no one (no woman at least) would freely opt to do sex work, because selling sex is itself proof (in normal women) of dysfunction. According to this perspective, the only possible motive for prostitution is the desire to escape extreme poverty or the threat of physical violence. The victim perspective stresses 'having to do' sex work or 'being driven' into the sex trade, and so the choices that sex workers make are of no consequence, hence listening to their views is irrelevant (Bell 1994, 73).

There do, however, exist more varied analyses of the motives for selling sex, perhaps the best known being *Prostitution and Morality* by Benjamin and Masters. This claims (1964, 90-92) that the leading factors responsible for prostitution can be divided into three groups:

1) Predisposing factors: for example coming from a broken home, parental (especially maternal) promiscuity, and a tolerant or permissive attitude to prostitution. **[5]** These are often linked to the individual's background.
2) Attracting factors: more income, an easier life, a more interesting and exciting life, and expectations of sexual satisfaction.
3) Precipitating factors: financial pressure, enticement by a pimp or another prostitute, unhappy love life, opportunity.

Benjamin and Masters (1964, 90-94, 106-107) had already made a division between voluntary and forced prostitution. Many of their successors differ from them, however, by differentiating between voluntary prostitution as a consequence of extreme poverty, and substance abuse and mental health problems as coercive factors. In their view, women are lured into prostitution primarily by the opportunity of relatively good earnings and an exciting life. A small number of sex workers enter the profession in order to satisfy their sexual needs. Sex workers interviewed by researchers said that they remain in the profession for the following reasons:

1) Better income, which is unavoidable for buying drugs;
2) A more interesting life and more interesting men;
3) Freedom from the working hours and routines of respectable professions;
4) Fulfilment of sexual needs;
5) Difficulty in ending the partnership with one's pimp;
6) Having an anti-social attitude due to police pressure and exclusion from society;
7) An inability to do other work.

Benjamin and Masters' study has been criticized for being male-centric and blind to gender power relations concerning sex (Jeffreys 1990, 136-137). Despite this, their study has been an important link on the journey from biology (see for instance Davis 1937, 745) towards social science as the methodological underpinning of sex work studies.

Prostitution and the great sex wars

In recent decades commercial sex has been theorized mainly within the sphere of feminist studies. From the 1970s and throughout the 1980s, Anglo-Saxon feminists were divided by bitter sex wars. **[6]** These included controversies over the correct strategies regarding heterosexuality (Rich 1983, 199-202; Hollibaugh & Moraga 1983), pornography (Dworkin 1988, 203-205; Coward 1982, 10), SM sex (Jeffreys 1994, 184-187; Rubin 1982, 210) and of course prostitution. Feminism was the first modern movement to raise the political importance of sex, and it was for this reason that the definitions accorded to sex were politicized.

The sex wars left their mark on the deeply divided feminist movement. The two warring camps are often identified as the radical feminists, who highlight violence and patriarchal subjugation , and the sex radicals or sex-positive feminists, for whom sex primarily means enabling pleasure and power. (Seidman 1992,6.) We find this rough division still being replicated in the research literature. For instance, Marjut Jyrkinen (2005, 104-108) unceremoniously lumps together in the same category concepts as diverse as sex workers' human rights movements, the notion of prostitution as fulfilling men's natural needs and paedophilia. But between these tendencies lies a far more complex terrain.

It was typical of the sex wars that although prostitution was discussed at length, academic writings offered comparatively little by way of empirical research. The argumentation advanced in academic contexts was also largely constructed on official assessments and individual cases. Research explained prostitution as being predominantly a sexuality disorder. This work was later criticized for the fact that researchers who had assimilated the victim perspective gathered material from reference groups with whom most sex workers had very little to do. The element of distortion was exacerbated by the fact that the 'gate keepers' were not sex workers, but instead a selective sample of police officers and social workers familiar with the field (for example Calhoun & Peyrot 1985, 346-347; Shaver 1996). "Those studies tell us something about prisoners, IV drug users, patients and runaway children (perhaps also about the role of commercial sex in their lives), but they do not provide a profile of 'The Prostitute'." *(Pheterson 1996, 30.)*

Currently, the two most frequently cited radical feminist studies (Farley et al. 2003; Høigård & Finstad 1992) are based on material collected in the 1990s. The inherent data-gathering problems are not as obvious in these studies, but in them too we find reasons why prostitution is confined to the framework of violence against women: because no one can imagine that they could start selling sex 'voluntarily'. They try to explain the phenomenon by various forms of coercion instead of that of individual choice.

Radical feminism does not constitute a tight-knit way of thinking **[7]**. It has no common agenda, but instead produces highly divergent writings. By radical feminism I refer here to the Anglo-Saxon genre of studies that emerged in connection with the discourse on pornography, placing sexual violence at the centre of societal analysis. Its main authorities were Andrea Dworkin, Kathleen Barry, Mary Daly, Susan Griffin, Catharine McKinnon, Robin Morgan, Adrianne Rich and later Sheila Jeffreys (Seidman 1992, 104). Though the origin of second-wave feminism is often located in leftwing movements, the debate on commercial sex supported, at least in the US, the neo-conservative movement (D'Emilio & Freedman 1988, 310-311, 351). **[8]**

Radical feminist analysis has largely been analysis of gendered violence. When sex is discussed mainly as an instrument of gendered violence and men as the problem (for example Lienert 1996, 156), a biologicized and sex antagonistic image easily prevails. The great majority of radical feminists do not condemn sex as such, but rather the forms that in their view support gendered oppression. Gender difference is thought of as a manifestation of subjugating sexual norms and practices. Women's sexuality is regarded as gentle, romantic and monogamous, while that of men – the culturally dominant form – includes genitalcentricity, commodification and promiscuity. We thus have two counterposed worlds of sex, the feminine being personal, intimate and good, the masculine being based on control, destruction and the pursuit of pleasure. (Seidman 1992, 105; Echols 1983, 449-450.) It therefore follows that prostitution specifically harms women's sexuality. Commercial sex is a facet of masculine sex:

"I am going to divide the crimes of violence against women into two categories: simple crimes, which include rape, battery, incest, torture, and murder; and complex crimes, which include sexual harassment, prostitution, and pornography. These acts are the primary violent abuses of women in the West." (Dworkin 1988, 178.)

The sexual violence perspective also informs radical feminism's politically and theoretically important critique of heterosexuality. Heterosexual desire is the eroticization of power, which is based on subordinate relations between men and women. It is most often expressed as the eroticization of women's subjugation, but is transposable to same sex relationships. (Jeffreys 1990, 299.) The clearest demand for abstaining from heterosexual relationships was perhaps the manifesto of the Leeds Revolutionary Feminist Group (1981), according to which every feminist should be a "political lesbian". **[9]** Though many radical feminists emphasize lesbianism more as a political and cultural stance, Robyn Rowland, for example, argues that there is more at stake. In her view choosing to be lesbian in a misogynistic society involves a risk that feminists in heterosexual relationships do not share. She says that the fact that the majority of women remain in subordinate relationships explains the heteronorm. (Rich 1983, 192; Rowland 1996, 78-79.)

We generally find at least two currents in radical feminism's attitudes to sex. The first sees all sex as reproducing patriarchy (*anti-sex feminism*), while the second is prepared to support certain forms of sex based on equality and reciprocal tenderness (*sex-positive feminism*) (Chapkis 1997, 12). **[10]**

For sex-positive feminists, prostitution is the antithesis of the sexuality they endorse. Good sex is intimate, sensual and feminine (Morgan 1977, 181), while prostitution and pornography represent violence, the eroticization of inequality, the commodification of women and masculine sex (Barry 1984, 266-267). Commercial sex is like tainted sex, patriarchy-induced subordination, which from the angle of prostitution may continually try to intrude into private relationships. According to this theory of contamination, commercial sex increases sexual violence against women and at the same time repeats it. (Jeffreys 1994, 31-46; Barry 1984, xii.)

For *anti-sex feminists* sex signifies patriarchy in such a fundamental way that it is impossible to separate the two. Accordingly, prostitution is in itself simply the clearest example of a consistent phenomenon (Chapkis 1997, 17). Though there are differences in the extent of subordinate relations, even the tenderest vanilla sex between women works to the advantage of masculine power symbols. It is through such symbolism that every woman is constructed as a whore, and the prostitute becomes a metaphor for women's subordinate position (MacKinnon 1989, 243).

Table 1: Radical feminism's approach to prostitution.

	Sex's power relationship	Sex	Prostitute
Pro-sex feminism / sex-positive feminism	Sex should be democratized	Destructive masculine sex (genitalcentric, promiscuous, commodification / gentle feminine sex (trust, intimacy, monogamy,	Victim
Anti-sex feminism	All sex replays patriarchy	Sex is intrinsically a masculine form of control	Victim, but also symbol of women's societal position

What both of these radical feminist trends have in common is that the difference between the genders is seen as being the most fundamental division that separates people (Rowland & Klein 1996, 18), and that sexuality has a replicating function for the power hierarchy between them. In this way, radical feminist theory does not really provide room for any analysis of the whole concept of gender, and has had to answer to the criticism of third-wave feminism. It has been attacked for sidelining other power structures (Collins 1991, 7-8) and thereby over-emphasizing the perspective of white middle-class women (Heywood & Drake 1999). Because of the men-women counterposition it has been viewed as renewing the gender division (Cox, Johnson, Newitz & Sandell 1999, 198-199) and as depicting women one-sidedly as passive victims (Sorisio 1999, 134-135).

Both radical feminist tendencies define prostitution as a prism through which to view women's subjugated position, the most blatant manifestation of the violence experienced by all women (Barry 1995, 11). Prostitution has grave consequences for all women, because it normalizes the climate of the commodification of women and makes it acceptable (Kulick 2005, 211-213, 219-221). On the radical feminist agenda it is as though prostitution is the follow-up question to that of pornography:

"Pornography, traditionally defined as the visual representation of prostitutes in the sex trade, is

both the practice of sexual exploitation and the ideology of cultural sadism. As a practice of sexual exploitation, women perform in pornography and they perform pornography in their personal relationships. This has led to a normalization of the prostitution of sexuality." (Barry 1996, 448.)

It is understandable that on this basis the issue of voluntary prostitution is a difficult one for radical feminists. Whether or not voluntary prostitution is "actually" voluntary, it is awkward from the viewpoint of radical feminists that some sex workers perceive themselves as choosing this line of work of their own free will. The issue grows all the more complex considering that it is precisely feminist studies that have emphasized the recognition of people's, and particularly women's, own voices and experiences (Rowland and Klein 1996, 10). Some bypass the problem by simply saying that no one can choose to be a prostitute voluntarily (Høigård & Finstad 1992, 183). Kathleen Barry (1995, 29-30; 70, 279) believes that prostitution has to be condemned without exception because of the disadvantages it has caused prostitutes themselves and other women. **[11]** A positive attitude to commercial sex is a kind of class betrayal or bad faith regarding the trauma of sexual violence (perhaps experienced in early childhood).

The radical feminist analysis also leaves open the issue that if prostitution really is a male privilege replicating the central gender hierarchy, why is it then pushed to into the margins and denied legal protection. For radical feminists commercial sex is comparable to marriage as a form of power relations, where a man has the right to penetrate a woman. The argument is at odds with the fact that the conservative movements that advocate marriage and male control consistently oppose prostitution. **[12]** (Zatz 1997, 290.)

When it comes to the other side in the sex wars, the sex-positive feminists, the issue is not one of a common tendency, rather of writings whose approximate unifying factor is their critique of radical feminist theory. The authors of these highlight individual agency and oppose the "...presumption that sexual activity (especially for money) is so harmful that whether or not we want to do it (or have any other way to make a living) is irrelevant. It threatens years of feminist struggle to win the right of adult women to enter into contracts." (Califia 1994, 124-125.)

Eva Pendleton (1997, 79) points out that if the integral mark of patriarchy is its unrestrained right to penetrate a woman, masculine sex can also be regarded as a factor that questions the system, because the sex worker allows only limited and conditional permission to men to realize their desires and fantasies.

For sex-positive feminists, any sexual act – including prostitution – can, depending on the situation, be either oppressive or emancipatory. Societal institutions and discourses separate what is normal/legal/healthy/abnormal/illegal/unhealthy, rewarding some forms of sexuality while penalizing others. In this way sexual oppression becomes a power structure in which sexual identities become a social hierarchy (Fergusen 1984, 109).

Chapkis (1997, 21) also divides sex-positive feminism into two viewpoints. Sexual libertarianism highlights individuality and individual freedom, while on the other hand sexual subversion aims to locate sex as an element of structures of power and difference. **[13]** *Libertarian sex radicals* certainly see power relations in commercial sex, but reckon that women have the upper hand. In their view, sex is a resource that women have more of at their disposal than men and which therefore levels out men's hold over many other resources, for instance money. In this respect the prostitute advances from being a victim for radical feminists into an emancipated hero. **[14]**

The libertarians have been criticized for sidelining the oppression inherent to heteronormative sex and for celebrating sexual pleasure uncritically (Raymond 1996, 238-239). **[15]** Whereas radical feminism values different forms of sex, for libertarians any form of consenting sex between two adults is acceptable. This view is at least partially blind to economic and cultural frameworks which place people in positions of inequality and blur the boundary between coercion and voluntariness.

Libertarian sex radicals recognize that there are many oppressive mechanisms related to sex. In their view commercial sex is not straightforwardly oppressive, but is one area of sex in which there is a struggle for power. Even meanings ascribed to sex by the patriarchy can be utilized and applied in unexpected ways in constructing a new sexual order. But this entails that sex be scrutinized and defined situation-specifically, from within its actual context.

Although the revolutionary sex radicals initially voiced a political response to radical feminism, their thinking subsequently greatly influenced the advent of so-called sex work research, facilitating a reconsideration of prostitution as a matter of choice: if commercial sex is not always and ubiquitously a result of coercion, it is reasonable to ask why and in what circumstances sex work is performed.

Sex radicals also take a critical approach to heteronorms. What is key here is not that women's subordinate position accompanies (crucially, according to many radical feminists) heterosexuality, rather the hierarchy between normative sex and other sexualities. Sex radicals stress that there is no such thing as inherently perverse sexual acts, rather what matters invariably are the structural, situational and individual power relations involved. Sex can be understood as one of the terrains of struggle, not just between genders but also between classes, generations and ethnic groups (Rubin & Butler 1994, 90).

As with radical feminists, the theoretical outlook of sex radicals is strongly linked to personal sexuality. If the radical feminist debate is being led by lesbians who idealize equality, monogamy and romantic sex, the key movers among sex radicals are often bisexuals or lesbians who identify with the butch-femme grouping, and many of them have close relations with gay, kinky and sex worker communities. However, Pat Califia has stressed that the sex radicalism he represents does not only entail bringing certain sexual norms into question:

"People whose erotic practices are deviant do tend to acquire an outsider's critical perspective on marriage, the family, heterosexuality, gender roles, and vanilla sex. But being a sex radical means being defiant as well as deviant. It means being aware that there is something unsatisfying and dishonest about the way sex is talked about (or hidden) in daily life. It also means questioning the way our society assigns privilege based on adherence to its moral codes, and in fact makes every sexual choice a matter of morality. If you believe that these inequalities can be addressed only through extreme social change, then you qualify as a sex radical, even if you prefer to get off in the missionary position and still believe there are only two genders." (Califia 1994, 11.)

Sex and social control

This study focuses on the sexual subversion tendency of sex radicalism. One of its key texts is Gayle Rubin's *Thinking Sex*, which criticizes the tendency of earlier sex research to view sexuality as naturally prescribed and therefore immutable. Only the recognition of sex's contextuality made it possible to comprehend the phenomenon. In Rubin's view, Western and Christian-based culture is unable to analyse sexuality as long as sex is approached as a special issue:

"Virtually all erotic behaviour is considered bad unless a specific reason to exempt it has been established. The most acceptable excuses are marriage, reproduction, and love. Sometimes scientific curiosity, aesthetic experience, or a long-term intimate relationship may serve. But the exercise of erotic capacity, intelligence, curiosity, or creativity all require pretexts that are unnecessary for other pleasures, such as the enjoyment of food, fiction, or astronomy." (Rubin 1989, 278.)

In Rubin's essay sex is a separate vector for oppression that cuts across other hierarchies of social inequality (class, ethnicity, gender), but does not directly revert to any of them. In her view sexuality cannot be examined solely from the gender perspective. (Rubin 1989, 293, 307-309.) Feminism's conceptual tools have been developed to seek out and make visible gendered power relations and to this end they work well. However, in interpreting power associated with sex the feminist runs into the same problem as Marxists who were interested in gender hierarchy: the tools of class analysis provided only limited purchase on other societal divisions.

Rubin (189, 279) views various sexual acts and relations as positioned in a hierarchical arrangement surmounted by married heterosexual couples. The ranking from here downward depends largely on how many ideal aspects a person's sexual behaviour meets or brings into question. For example, people in a steady homosexual relationship are relatively high up, but polyamorous gays only slightly above transpeople, sadomasochists and sex workers. A person's social position significantly determines their place in the sexual hierarchy. General appreciation, mental health, legality, structural support and

many economic advantages adhere to acceptable forms of sex, but the lower down the hierarchy one is placed the easier it is to be associated with mental illness, disreputableness, criminality, economic sanctions and restricted social and physical mobility.

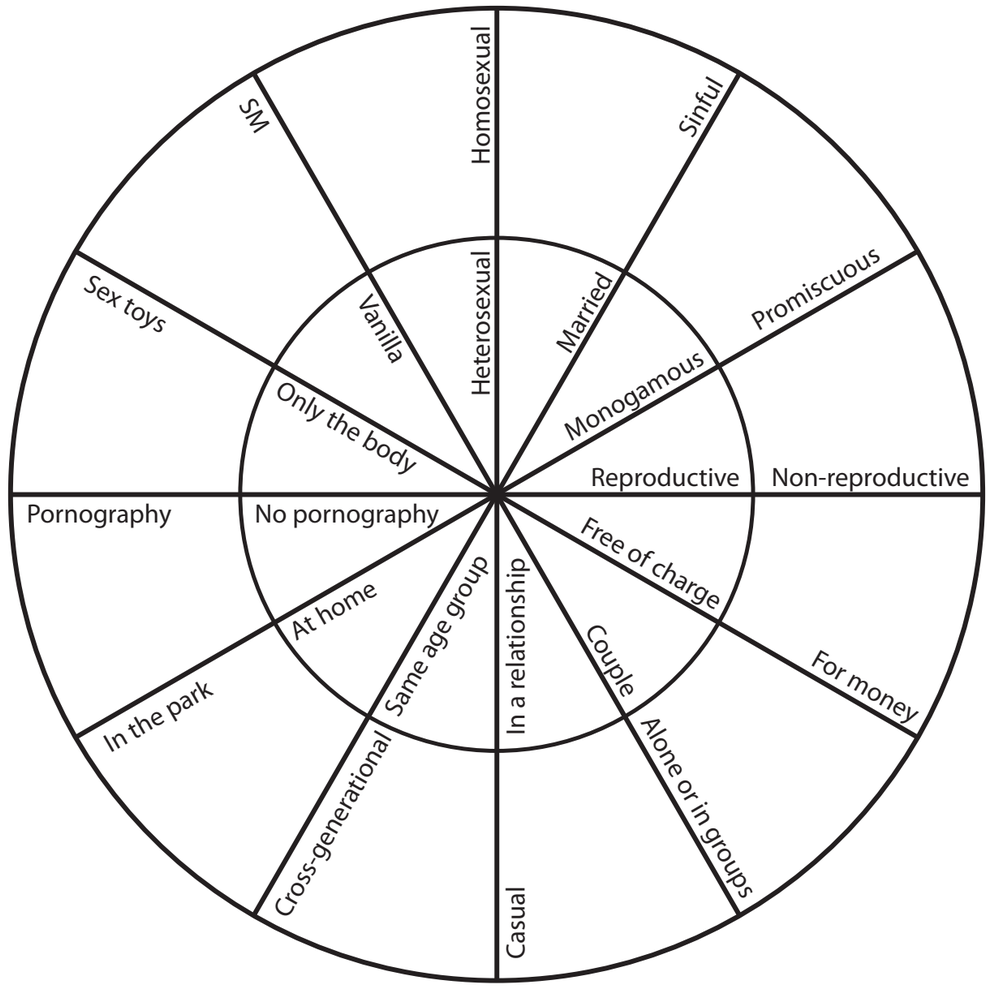
Rubin's theory emphasizes historical and cultural fluctuation. A no-man's land lies between ideal and unconditionally reprehensible sex where there are continual negotiations concerning the boundaries of acceptability. For example, over the last few decades homosexuality has shifted significantly closer towards the ideal, while sexual relations between people of different ages has become more discreditable than previously.

In Rubin's view (1989, 282), the mechanism itself remains the same even though religious, medical and political debates idealize different matters. It is typical that only a small number of books on sex are valued as being safe, healthy, mature, lawful or politically correct. We can scrutinize this permissible sex in terms of the moral variation that takes place within the individual act (for example, depending on the context, a heterosexual relationship may be free, coerced, healing or self-destructive), while, on the other hand, sex that takes place on the reprehensible side of the dividing line, such as prostitution, is seen by nature to be undifferentiated:

"This kind of sexual morality has more in common with ideologies of racism than with true ethics. It grants virtue to the dominant groups, and relegates vice to the underprivileged. A democratic morality should judge sexual acts by the way partners treat one another, the level of mutual consideration, the presence or absence of coercion, and the quantity and quality of the pleasures they provide." (Rubin 1989, 283.)

Figure 1: The sex hierarchy: the magic circle and its perimeters.

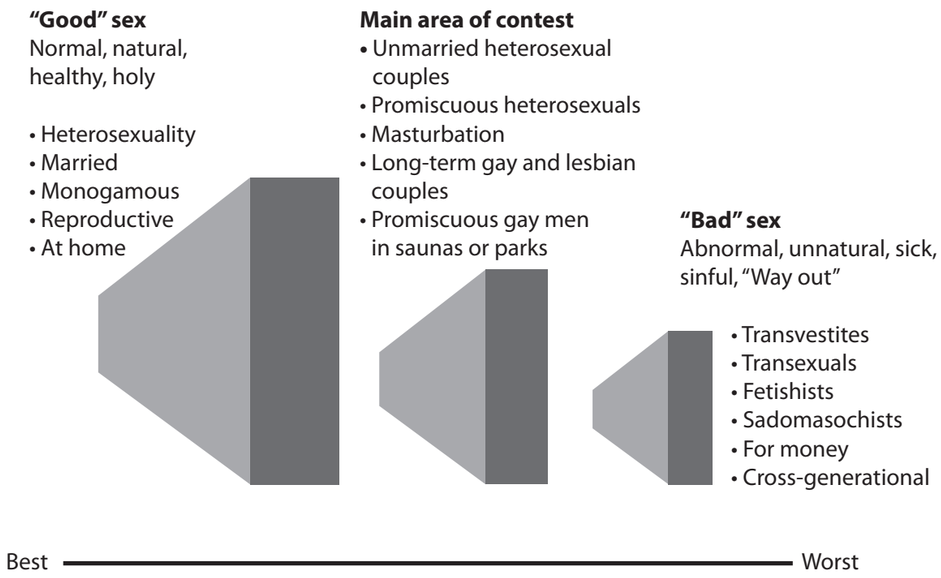
Magic circle:
Good, normal, natural, holy sexuality
Heterosexual, Married, Monogamous, Reproductive, Free of charge, Couple, In a relationship, Same age group, At home, No pornography, Only the body, Vanilla



Perimeter:
Bad, abnormal, unnatural, cursed sexuality
Homosexual, Sinful, Promiscuous, Non-reproductive, For money, Alone or in group, Casual, Cross-generational, In the park, Pornography, Sex toys, SM

Source: Rubin Gayle. Thinking Sex: Notes for Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality. In *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring female sexuality*, ed. by Carole S. Vance. London, Pandora 1989.

Figure 2: The sex hierarchy: the struggle over the boundaries between acceptable and reprehensible sex



Source: Rubin Gayle. Thinking Sex: Notes for Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality. In *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring female sexuality*, ed. by Carole S. Vance. London, Pandora 1989.

This view deals with some very traditional sore points in prostitution studies, both for feminist and sexological studies: a blindness to the variances of power and exploitation, including at the lowest levels of the sexual hierarchy and an unwillingness to examine sexual power in its entirety (English & Hollibaugh & Rubin 1981, 46-47). As a result the approach of revolutionary sex radicalism to sex work differs in at least three respects from radical feminism. First, it considers the sex worker as a sexual and political person and not just as a passive object. Second, it deals with sex work as primarily a form of employment within which the amount of exploitation and emancipation varies. Third, in its view the transactional terms are just one aspect of a broad spectrum of sexual practices. (Sloan & Wahab 2000, 470.)

Examining commercial sex from the perspective of sexual hierarchy does not imply that we have to abandon gender. The material I use in this study is largely generated by women – as is the majority of empirical research on sex work. Indeed most sex work is performed by women. Understanding the gender differentiation of labour markets probably requires recognition of gender distinction. For instance, the stigma attached to prostitution is expressly a historical control mechanism for women's sexuality.

Looking at gender alone is not enough, however. There are other sexual minorities who – in numbers much larger relative to their respective populations – work in the commercial sex trade and who find it hard to conceal their deviation from accepted norms. Their motive might purely be the opportunity to make a living in an interesting line of work, but often there is a background of prejudice encountered on the official jobs market. When the reason why a cross-dresser takes up sex work is the lack of other prospects for making a living, the crucial factor is not their biological and social gender. In chapter four I examine sex work as one form of marginalized sex. Shannon Bell (1994, 103-105) and others have highlighted the similarity between the abuse that prostitutes and (other) sexual minorities encounter. The academic and political debate has exposed in particular the common historical destiny of sex workers and lesbians as being unwomanly (Nestle 1987), and the repeated use of laws that criminalize prostitution against other sexual minorities (Rubin 1982, 197-199).

One of the primary names in sex worker research is Gail Pheterson, whose collections of essays *A Vindication of the Rights of Whores* and *The Prostitution Prism* struggle with the debate described above but focus mainly on the perspective of sex workers' experience of discrimination. Pheterson has herself been actively involved in movements for sex workers' rights. **[16]** She draws on Rubin's idea of sex as a separate hierarchy alongside class and ethnicity, but puts more emphasis than many sex radicals on the genderization of power and is primarily interested in sexual control targeted at women. Pheterson's work contains many of the typical features of later sex work research, such as emancipation, the subject as the focus of study, the perspective of grassroots experience and a focus on sex as a power relationship societally and between individuals. Her work nevertheless marks a clear departure from the later writings in the field, which assign a key role to economics and women's prospects for making a living.

There are also mechanisms connected to commercial sex where an understanding of gender is key but does not derive solely from gender. Repression and emancipation mechanisms related to race, gender, class, religion and sexual orientation are all part of an intricate network of structures of control. Instead of playing with comparisons and shared priorities it is more fruitful to consider how they stand in relation to one another and need one another. (Collins 1991, 222-225.)

In chapter five I look at sex as an alternative to wage labour for young women. Although the issue is that of a gendered labour market, it is at the same time an issue of class distinctions: sex work is not an attractive alternative to any sort of work besides poorly paid blue-collar employment.

It is important to examine prostitution as a form of labour not simply so that we can better appreciate the changing economic contexts behind sex work, but because of the resources that constitute the struggle for autonomy in this field. If prostitution is seen only as an absolute mechanism of exploitation (radical feminism) or merely as one form of sexuality (sex radicals), how is it that sex workers manage to organize themselves to demand health care, work safety and a minimum wage, or even their protection against exploitation, discrimination and violence?

Sex work research

Prostitution has for a long time been the basic concept of social scientific research on commercial sex. The word is problematic, however, because it correlates with a line of thinking that denies the prostitute's self agency and experiences. Even the very word 'prostitute' conveys disparaging connotations. **[17]**

Prostitution studies have changed direction in the last 15 years, with a new focus being placed on *sex work*. Holly Wardlow (2004, 1017-1018) distinguishes four standpoints through which this change has come about. Not all sex workers would subscribe to them, but they depict in fairly broad terms the accepted assumptions concerning the circumstances of sex work and the manner in which it is researched:

1) There is too much historical baggage associated with the word *prostitute*, and so *sex work* is more neutral.
2) The choice of concept is a political stance: when commercial sex is defined as work, it is natural to demand the same rights for sex workers as for other workers.
3) Sex work puts the emphasis on the activity as a means of earning a living, whereas *prostitute* is a more comprehensive – and strongly stigmatizing – form of identity.
4) Sex work makes visible the structural causes underlying commercial sex, poverty and women's responsibility for maintaining the family.

The term 'sex work' has also of course been criticized. Ann Weatherall and Ann Priestley (2001, 332) argue that calling it 'work' associates prostitution with an economic alternative in which the parties are presumed to be involved voluntarily and willingly. This conceals the economic and social power relations that actually circumscribe people's freedom of choice (see also Barry 1995, 296.) In my view Weatherall and Priestley's stance disregards the debates held in the sphere of Marxist theory where the central focus is on efforts to achieve emancipation at work and from work. In this sense sex work can

be construed very well as a part of the general exploitation of workers (Ward 2007; Gall 2006).

Recent sex work studies have certain typical features in common: respect for sex workers' own experiences, the use of empiricism and the analysis of power relations. **[18]** Their main topics include legislation affecting sex workers (Brock 1998), the internal power relations of commercial sex (O'Connel Davidson 1998), the mobility typical of the sex industry (Kempadoo 1998), representations of commercial sex (Bell 1994) and the health and safety of sex workers (Taylor 2006). Counter to the myths that surround the issue, sex work research also emphasizes the sector's inner variances both in relation to the terms of selling sex (Whelehan 2001, 47, 130) and to the motives involved (Petro 2006, 25). There is also a strong link with research on mobile, unstable and informal work (Agustín 2007). In this respect the reasons for sex work naturally place an emphasis on factors to do with financial income.

Although no extensive research has been done focussing specifically on the motives of sex workers, many of the writings that are based on interviews with sex workers tend to sideline the issue. The sex workers interviewed by Mckeganey and Barnard (1996, 24-26) in the United Kingdom almost unanimously specified financial motives, but there was variation in their underlying reasons for needing money, as indeed also in the nature of the work they performed. For some, it was a matter of making up for poor conditions and pay in wage work, others financed their drug use with it, and for others sex work was a way to deal with occasional heavy expenses. Apart from financial reasons, the underlying reason for taking up sex work may be to do with persuasion and pressure from a close quarter (O'Neill 1996).

Commercial sex has throughout history been bound up with the question of how society should relate to it. Sex work research rests partly on the third wave of feminism, which has evolved in tandem with social movements, just as with earlier generations of feminists. Events such as the International Congresses of Whores (1985 and 1986), International Committee for Prostitute Rights (1985), World Whores Summit (1989), National Conference of Prostitutes in Brazil (1987) and the World Charter for Prostitutes' Rights (1985) defined a new arena of political (and academic) agency in the domain between sex and work. (Bell 1994, 99.) Demands have been voiced widely for the decriminalization of sex work, its recognition as legitimate employment and the acknowledgement of prostitutes as working women. The main themes have been freedom of choice of profession, health and safety. (Cabezas 1998, 81-82.)

I have collected material for this study from people who take or have at some stage of their lives taken immediate financial remuneration for performing sexual acts. The difference between this and any other ongoing sexual relationship is the seller's understanding of the clear transactional nature of these acts. **[19]** When it is unavoidable because of the context, I call them 'prostitutes', for instance in my differentiation between prostitution and other forms of sex work. **[20]** However, I mainly use the terms 'sex work' and 'sex workers'. (Compare Quillemant & Caixeta 2004, 19-20.)

Apart from being practical and grounded in my research material, replacing prostitution with sex work is also an ethical choice. In line with previous research, the exploitation occurring in the area of commercial sex essentially resembles the problems associated with the low status work in other domains of the grey sector. Consequently, efforts to resolve them should resort to similar means. Sex workers need to gain official employee status if they are to be able to demand according rights. (Bindman 1997; Gall 1006, 161-163.)

I collected my research material from prostitutes who are working or have worked in Finland. They mainly represent the middle class of sex workers, which in earlier research literature referred to a position within the internal hierarchy of commercial sex (Murphy & Venkatesh 2006). Although we find practically all forms of sex work in Finland, the middle class here occupies an exceptionally dominant position. From a global perspective, almost all Finnish prostitution appears to be middle class. Sex is for sale independently over the internet, because the proceeds are good, sex workers are in a good bargaining position with respect to their clients and they view their work as a professional activity, even when it is undertaken as a very occasional sideline. There are indications that the amount of middle class sex work is increasing, at least in the West. By the same token, just as independent worker aristocrats have acted as the motors of workers' resistance and voluntary organization ever since industrialization (Geary 1981, 52-54), so too in sex work the buds of emancipation are most clearly visible, at least in theory, in its privileged sector. Thus a study of those working in a moderately secure position can provide an answer to the following question: Under what terms and in what contexts might sex work be a reasonable option?

In chapter six in particular I write about *whores*. The word is mainly associated with notions of depraved and contemptible women who transgress sexual norms. But when used by sex workers, the word 'whore' may have connotations of professional pride, emancipation and a disregard for the norms society places on women's sexuality (Murphy & Venkatesh 2006, 130).

2. Prostitution in Finland [21]

Finland remains a comparatively homogenous country. People with an immigrant background make up only four per cent of the population of roughly five million. Cities and towns are small and until the 1960s most of the population lived in rural areas. The majority of the population speaks Finnish as their native language and belongs to the Evangelical Lutheran Church.

In a community like Finland prostitution has long been invisible. Cold weather, dark winters and the small size of population centres make the sort of street population of large cities impossible. Though public services have been cut back and income differences have increased since the beginning of the 1990s, the remnants of the Nordic welfare state are still able to put a brake on impoverishment and, consequently the problems associated with prostitution. Due to the spread of communications technology and the high level of education of the population, most sex sales takes place anonymously over the internet.

Because of its invisibility, there are no comprehensive sources concerning Finnish sex work. A number of official reports have been published, but they mainly focus on criminalized forms of commercial sex. It is for this reason that it is difficult to make any general observations about the field of prostitution. We have no quantifiable information concerning the largest group of sex workers, who are women who practice prostitution occasionally. In fact it is not even certain whether they really constitute the largest group.

In this chapter, I supplement the one-sidedness of the official reports with the viewpoints of commercial sex operators. In addition to sex workers, I interviewed a number of police and social work officials employed in key areas to do with sex work, but also pimps, researchers, clients and employees of channels of advertising. Some of these specialists are referenced by name for the interview, while in other places I just give the source of the information.

The interrogation protocols of the Helsinki National Bureau of Investigation constitute a major portion of my material concerning crime related to commercial sex. I used this corpus mainly for collecting data on pimping offences and sex workers from outside Finland. I also catalogued similar basic information from my meetings with 41 sex workers who live in Finland permanently, the majority of whom are Finns who are acting independently.

Sex workers

Estimates of the numbers of prostitutes working in Finland vary widely from a few hundred to tens of thousands. The proportion of Finns involved is probably underrated, because their work is for the most part invisible and is beyond the concerns of official monitoring. There are no estimates for the number of Finns who sell sex casually, but the part-time prostitute is thought to be normally a student, single mother or unmarried woman facing temporary financial difficulties.

There is often some confusion about whether we are talking about sex workers who offer services at a particular point in time or about all people who sell sex in Finland from time to time. The first column of figures in the table below refers to the estimated number of prostitutes available on any particular day, the second column refers to the number of instances sex is sold at least once in the course of a year.

Table 2: Estimates of the number of prostitutes working in Finland. [22]

Prostitutes	Working per day	Working per year
Visiting Finland		
• From the St Petersburg region	100 **[23]**	2 500 **[24]**
• From the Murmansk region	15 **[25]**	60 **[26]**
• From Estonia	100 **[27]**	2 000 **[28]**
Total	215	4 560
Living in Finland permanently		
• Finns full-time **[29]**	100	200
• Russians and Estonians full-time **[30]**	30	50
• Thais full-time **[31]**	50	100
• Part-time (mainly Finns) **[32]**	120	3 000
Total of permanent residents	300	3 350
Total of temporary and permanent residents	**515**	**7 910**

This table provides an indication of how large a proportion of prostitutes are connected to pimping. It is in the interests of visiting sex workers to earn as much money as possible before their residence visa runs out, and so they often collaborate with pimps, who arrange working premises, procure clients and provide start-up capital (Sillanpää 2005; Sirkiä 2004). By contrast, there are much weaker ties between pimps and sex workers living permanently in Finland. In addition, is appears that, overall, the use of tourist visas for prostitution has declined (Seuraaja 1 2005; Skaffari & Urponen 2004; Kivelä 2004), which would signify a drop in pimping offences. Evidently, as a result of Estonia's membership of the European Union it is more often the case that Estonians who sell sex do so independently (Kivelä 2004; Sirkiä 2005). On this basis, I would estimate that about a quarter of sex workers working in Finland each day and a third working each year operate with or under a pimp.

Individuals who sell sex can be divided into a four-fold categorization based on professionalization and country of residence. **[33]** Each factor influences the working conditions of the sex worker.

The horizontal axis depicts time spent in Finland. The situation in terms of legislation of people living permanently in Finland and those visiting the country differs. In light of the fact that suspicion of selling sex constitutes grounds for returning a person to their homeland, those coming from outside the EU have less protection from pressure and violence. In addition, those living permanently in Finland have a possibility of recourse to many services in the social and health sector, which are closed off to tourists and people who reside in Finland illegally (Kauppinen 2004). On the other hand, those living and working permanently in Finland have to manage the social stigma of their commercial sex dealings on a daily basis. Working in another country makes it easy to return to a socially accepted position in one's own community.

The vertical axis depicts how sex workers' degree of experience and professionalism affects their capacity to avoid risks and their negotiating position with clients and pimps. Those selling sex independently are responsible for their own safety, and most learn with time how to avoid dangerous situations. Safe sex is also evidently more widespread among professionals.

Figure 3: Finnish prostitution in 2005 by duration of stay and degree of professionalism (prices checked at 2008 rates).

1. Professionals who live in Finland	**2. Professionals who visit Finland**
•Finnish and foreigners who have permanent residence permits • Women • On average 1-2 clients daily • Prices from about €100 upward • 'Company for afternoon coffee', intimate massage, escort, SM, etc. **[34]** • Independent • Some pay taxes using their own business name	• Mainly Estonians and Russians • Stay a few weeks at a time • Women • On average 3-5 clients daily • Prices from €80 upwards • 'Company for afternoon coffee', striptease • From the St Petersburg region and Estonia, some with pimps • No tax obligations in Finland
3. Casuals living in Finland	**4. Visiting Finland occasionally**
• Finns • Women and men • Clients occasionally • Prices vary • 'Company for afternoon coffee', intimate massage • Independent • Do not usually pay taxes	• Mainly Estonians and Russians • Stay a few weeks at a time • Women, a few men • Working periods of on average 3-5 clients daily • Prices from €80 upwards '• Company for afternoon coffee', striptease • From the St Petersburg region and Estonia, some with pimps • No tax obligations in Finland

The most conspicuous group at present consists of *professionals operating in Finland*. They obtain most of their income from selling sex and identify themselves as sex workers. Professionalism is evident in such things as payment of taxes under a business name, participating in networking among sex workers, and aspiring to develop their work and independence. In addition to Finns, this group includes foreign nationals who have been granted permanent residence permits. Nearly all sex workers who appear in public are professionals (interviews with sex workers and clients).

Professionals who visit Finland have usually also travelled around many other countries (Sillanpää 2005). It may be that they have steady jobs in brothels and escort agencies in St Petersburg or Tallinn. *Professionals who visit Finland* do not usually sell sex in their own countries. They may visit Finland just once or at regular intervals. It pays financially to work in Finland and it also makes it possible to return to one's own country to fulfil other roles. (Escort 1; Interrogation protocols 2000-2005.)

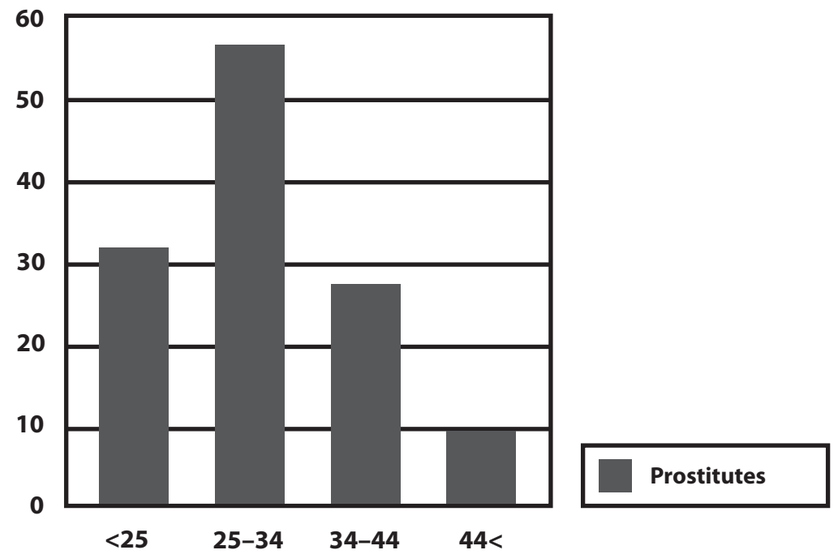
It is not easy to survey *casuals living in Finland*. They sell sex irregularly or else have a small and regular client base, and they mainly make their living from other work or live on social assistance. Because of the sporadic nature of their involvement, they do not really know other sex workers and they conceal their personal identity with great care. (For example Kontula & Haavio-Mannila 1997, 141; Interviews with sex workers.) Some casuals are in socially vulnerable situations, for instance because of drug addiction or mental health problems, but the group also includes expensive escorts.

We find Thai sex workers in each of the four groups. Their work is mainly associated with Thai massage and is therefore at the same time more conspicuous and more concealed that other forms of prostitution. Nearly all massage parlours provide some sort of sexual service (Kivelä 2004; Escort 2 2005).

Commercial sex is a gendered phenomenon. The majority of sex workers are women and most of their clients are men. There are, though, men who sell sex and women who are clients, and there are indications that this is becoming more common (Skaffari & Urponen 2004, 58; Kivelä 2004). The sex selling relationship may be either heterosexual or homosexual, and sex workers often have clients who suit their own sexual orientation. **[35]** Transpeople provide sexual services for their own group or provide consultation to help clients develop their own trans-identity.

In addition, people of different ages perform sex work. There is no significant difference between Finns and non-Finns, though sex workers who visit Finland are almost all adults and under 50. **[36]** There are both older and younger sex workers among those who live in Finland permanently.

Figure 4: The age distribution of prostitutes operating in Finland (sample of 126)



Source: Interrogation protocols 2000-2005 and the Directory of Sex Workers Living in Finland 2003-2005.

Nearly all of the sex workers I interviewed had some kind of secondary education, others also had vocational college diplomas. Half had matriculated. The most popular pastimes among them were reading and different kinds of literature, ranging from novels to newspaper columns. All had some sort of cultural interest, though only half were interested in sports (Interviews with sex workers). Sex workers visiting Finland did not differ markedly from Finns in this respect. Sex workers intercepted by the authorities who came from Estonia to Finland were usually educated and for most of them selling sex was a temporary source of income. (Lehti & Aromaa 2002, 62-63.)

It is also impossible to generalize about the marital or familial status of sex workers operating in Finland. The group includes singles, people who are divorced or widowed, but also people in common law relationships or who are married. Some have children, others don't. As a rule, though, people take up sex work at a point in their lives when they are not in a steady relationship (Interviews with sex workers).

Forms of sex work

Time of day and season have an influence on the kind of sexual services that are on offer. The commercial sex terrain is constantly changing, but within it there are seasonal variations. For instance, certain services depend on the time of day (prostitution in bars) or the time of year (street prostitution). Events that predominantly attract middle-aged men often see a momentary spike in demand.

The widely recognized Finnish colloquialism for standard paid sex is '*company for afternoon coffee*'. **[37]** This is a remnant from when newspapers forbade the publication of advertisements for commercial sex (Varsa 1986). It generally means vaginal intercourse, which may be preceded by oral sex or intimate massage. 'Company for afternoon coffee' is a broad uniting category for nearly all commercial sex services offered by prostitutes from abroad working temporarily and the majority of those working permanently in Finland. Encounters are arranged in the seller's or client's private apartment, in an apartment rented by a pimp, or in a hotel, and last from between 15 minutes to an hour.

Though oral sex often functions as foreplay, it has a firm place in *street prostitution*, particularly when encounters take place in a car or some other similarly cramped and uncomfortable place. The amount of street prostitution has declined appreciably in recent years and is now confined mainly to a few streets in downtown Helsinki.

Not all services offered by sex workers involve intercourse or oral sex, and for some they constitute just a small part of the job description. *Intimate massage* refers in sexual services variously either to massage and gratifying clients manually or simply the latter. Most Thai massage parlours and many sex workers who live permanently in Finland provide intimate massage. Compared to intercourse, intimate massage is inexpensive, and if it includes real massage is also more time-consuming and demanding physically.

Escort services are offered for a variety of occasions, such as holidays, parties and receptions for which the client requests a paid escort. In these cases the appointment usually lasts for several hours and involves other forms of paid companionship in addition to sex. Sex workers also provide escort services, but owing to the public and social nature of such contact not all of them do. On the part of services provided by men for women they play a more central role. Meanwhile, some escorts do not sell sex in any shape or form, in which case the service they provide can no longer be termed as sex work.

Depending on the sex worker involved, services may include practically anything. The most common *special services* are SM (games based on dominating or being dominated), excretive games, dressing up games and other fetish-based services. These all demand experience and some require definite skill. Many also necessitate expensive equipment and even a permanent studio.

For some years following the collapse of the Soviet Union there was a surge of conspicuous commercial sex in the motels and accommodation centres of Northern Finland in which Finnish men provided custom for women visiting from Russia. The phenomenon of "girl busses", coach loads of young women coming from Murmansk to Northern Finland, has given way to sex work between these points that has more of an escort service character. With this '*precision prostitution*' the seller and client know one another beforehand and often the client will extend an official invitation to facilitate obtaining a visa. Since the women spend a longer time at the home of their clients, services they provide extend beyond those of an exclusively sexual nature. They clean, prepare meals, wash laundry, provide company, bathe the client in the sauna, and so on. (Skaffari 2005.)

Client contact

Generally speaking, regular customers make up a significant part of the client base of sex workers who live in Finland permanently. Because demand outweighs supply, clients covet the contact details of the sex workers they access. To secure a steady client base, sex workers are nevertheless prevailed to use established channels for establishing contacts.

The most common practice for establishing contacts with clients is by indirect advertising on internet dating sites. There are similar advertisements to some extent in newspapers and magazines. The differentiation between commercial and non-commercial announcements is done using certain code words, which require a little practice to spot. Porn magazines carry more direct sex advertising for commercial sex, as does the foreign-owned *Sihteeriopisto* website. Contacts from papers and magazines and on the internet are followed up over the phone or by email.

In many Western countries massage parlours are an established on-call prostitution institution (e.g. Brock 1998, 31-39). Sex workers do not solicit clients in public spaces, and though a significant portion of client visits are arranged by phone in advance, the sex workers are reachable, at least in principle, by entering the premises. Other on-call places include streets and bars, but then the sexual act itself is performed elsewhere. Nowadays, there are very few sex workers on the streets in Finland, and prostitutes regularly frequent only certain bars in the capital and in tourist centres in Lapland. A certain amount of client contacts are apparently also established privately in erotic bars and sex shops. **[38]**

When sex workers work outside their hometowns they customarily rent a hotel room. Hotels, however, keep blacklists, and the use of elevator cards and CCTV makes working in hotels difficult (Interviews with sex workers; Skaffari 2005). A significant part of pimp-controlled prostitution from the East nowadays takes place in mini-brothels established in rented apartments. Some professional sex workers have separate workrooms. These may be regular 'fucking pads' for 'afternoon coffee' sessions, but there are also small SM studios in nearly all large towns – though only some of them provide the sort of services that would fit the legal definition of 'sexual services'.

Table 3: How client contacts are established

Client contact	Agreeing on the service	The act
Street	Face-to-face	Client's home
bar / erotic bar	By phone	Sex worker's home
Internet / newspapers	By email	Hotel
Men's networking	Chat rooms	Massage parlour
Steady clients		Studio (especially SM)
Massage parlour		Car
Flyers		Mini-brothel

There are many non-Finns involved in sex work in Finland, including people who have obtained Finnish citizenship or permanent residence. Most of them are women from Russia, Estonia and the Far East. Often they have married Finns and so have been able to remain in the country. **[39]** Sex work becomes an alternative source of earnings when their marriage breaks up, sometimes also during it. Though some of those who come to Finland via marriage have done sex work in their country of origin, few consciously aim to obtain a residence permit to safeguard their sex work. It is more a case of women who dream of the secure existence of a housewife but who, for financial or social reasons, end up doing sex work in Finland.

The status of women from the former socialist countries and Thailand differs. Those coming from Estonia or Russia for two weeks, or those who have come to Finland permanently, work alone or in small, sporadically formed communities. There is scant social support. Thais, on the other hand, work

in relatively close-knit networks, based partly on family relations or a common home. Sex work in these communities is common and apparently does not stigmatize the workers so strongly. A significant proportion of income is sent home and the rest put into savings. Finland's communities of Thai prostitutes closely resemble similar ethnic subcultures in other EU countries: the women keep each other company, speak Thai, eat Thai food and read Thai newspapers. (Seuraaja 2 2005; Lisborg 2003, 153.)

The risks of sex work

The general conception is that sex workers are exceptionally vulnerable to violence by clients. While conducting my research, however, I came across only a few sex workers who had been assaulted by a client. I heard of some cases indirectly from the accounts of other specialists (Kauppinen 2004; Muuri 2004; Seuraaja 2005). Violence by clients is a difficult problem if only because sex workers subjected to violence have weaker than average recourse to the justice system due to the stigma of their profession. This is seen particularly in rape cases. Although they are known to happen and many have even been brought to court, to my knowledge not a single sentence has been passed for the rape of a sex worker (Kontula 2006).

Another common myth do with sex workers is anxiety related to sexually transmitted diseases. I have not, however, come across any references suggesting any link between an elevated risk of infectious disease and commercial sex in Finland, though many sex workers complain constantly of urinary and yeast infections. **[40]** The reasons for the low numbers of infections related to prostitution are due to effective health care and adequate sex education, but also to sex workers' independence. As a rule, they are able to exert an influence over their own working conditions, which in practice leads to more conscientious condom use in relations with clients.

A more pivotal connection between sexually transmitted diseases and sex work has to do with alcoholism and drug addiction. Some drug addicts finance their drug use by selling sex (Kauppinen 2005; Interviews with sex workers). There is a certain amount of data showing that some women in socially vulnerable situations, suffering from alcoholism or mental health problems exchange sex for alcohol or small sums of cash (Skaffari & Urponen 2004, 39-40). Alcohol is a common part of the working culture among Russian sex workers (Hani & Henno 2007).

Regardless of the many health and safety hazards related to the sector, sex workers themselves name social stigma as the biggest problem associated with their work. The discrimination and marginalization that sex workers experience ultimately accounts for many other problems they encounter (e.g. with housing, employment, study opportunities, legal protection and child custodianship).

Pimping

The sex sector is usually perceived as a uniform entity, with prostitution on a par with the rest of the sex industry. In terms of occupational status, however, there is one clear difference between its sub-industries: whereas a significant majority of prostitutes (in Finland) are self-employed, workers in the porn industry, erotic bars and in phone sex can be classified as wage earners or the equivalent. **[41]**

This is why prostitutes have unique status within the sex sector. The sex workers I met who live in Finland have a negative view of pimping and know about it only from the mass media. They feel that the very idea of earning a pimp's share of income would involve taking many more customers than they would otherwise take in order to maintain their standard of living (compare O'Connel Davidson 1998, 20), furthermore in most cases with the pimp in control. **[42]**

The issue of pimping is not always so straightforward, however. There are situations where operating with a pimp brings more cash in hand than by working independently. It is also not unheard of that the same person both sells sex and pimps for others (see O'Connell Davidson 1998, 48). This may be the case, for instance, when it pays to have one person coordinating the subsidiary practicalities of selling sex (dealing with premises, advertising, etc.) for legal and cultural reasons and suchlike, or because the sex worker does not have the necessary resources, such as language skills, to handle them.

The degree of exploitation of sex workers in pimping criminality also varies greatly. Though a large part of pimping is evidently affiliated with organized crime (Sillanpää 2005), for example organized transportation rings facilitate prostitution from Murmansk to Lapland, where the women pay part of their proceeds to drivers and accommodation providers as protection money. (Skaffari & Urponen 2004, 41-47). In some instances a pimp has asked for a relatively small daily rent on the apartment he organizes and the sex seller has otherwise operated independently. There are also cases where the pimp takes care of everything except the sex, leaving the sex worker with very little independence and only a small share of the earnings.

It has been estimated that there is little human trafficking linked to commercial sex in Finland (Steering group proposal 2007, 8). There are many reasons for the absence of extensive human trafficking. One is that, due to the standard of living gap, it is profitable for the sex worker to operate even though the pimp takes a share of the proceeds. **[43]** In addition, for pimps sex workers constitute the biggest risk of being caught. It has been relatively easy for Russians and Estonians to cross the border into Finland, and because the women have good language skills and are educated it is easier for them to break off relations with pimps in the event of problems.

Legislation

There are numerous laws that regulate commercial sex directly and indirectly (Appendix D). The Penal Code defines sexual services in connection with pimping. The definition is not entirely clear, but it has been interpreted as meaning at least vaginal intercourse, anal intercourse, oral sex or the massaging or touching of the genitals provided as a commercial service. **[44]** Sexual services therefore include not only the traditional 'company for afternoon coffee' but also intimate massage.

Prostitution does not enjoy the status of a legitimate livelihood. Though there are statutory bookkeeping and taxation obligations attached to income derived from selling sexual services, foreigners cannot be granted a working permit for selling sex and a sex worker's legal position in terms of pension and employment is not considered equal to those of legitimate livelihoods. (Lehti & Aromaa 2002, 14.) **[45]** In practice, the sex worker has to establish a business name for purposes other than prostitution in order to fulfil her statutory obligations. (Sirkiä 2005).

The *Public Order Act* of October 2003, which replaced local government ordinances, bans buying and selling sexual services in public places, such as on the street or in business premises. In the end, the act had very little impact on commercial sex because street prostitution is mainly confined to Helsinki, where buying and selling was banned a few years earlier by a local public order regulation. This public order ordinance was significant at the time because it gave the police the right to intervene in visible sex trading and contain venues where this occurs (Muuri 2004). It also undermined the possibilities for foreigners who could not speak Finnish to obtain clients by themselves and so strengthened the position of pimps, at least temporarily (Sirkiä 2004). The insecurity experienced by sex workers increased during the transition phase, as clients learnt to procure services elsewhere. Sex workers who had long worked the streets had learnt through experience to spot and avoid dangerous situations, and amidst the changes this learning curve had to start all over again (Kauppinen 2004).

Since 1999, under the *Aliens Act*, a person may be refused entry to Finland if there are reasonable grounds to suspect that they sell or intend to sell sexual services. **[46]** There are grounds for such suspicion if, for instance, a person has previously, either casually or professionally, obtained income from the sale of sexual services (Lehti & Aromaa 2002, 22). As a result of the act, any sex worker arriving from outside the EU has to operate invisibly in Finland, which is difficult without the assistance of a pimp. In the event of problems, the threshold of recourse to the authorities is high, as calling in the police may result in the sex worker being banned from Finland indefinitely. In addition, people who molest (mainly Russian) sex workers are aware of their weak legal status, and foreign sex workers ob-

viously are at greater risk than Finns of falling victim to assault or rape.

Because practically all forms of prostitution are sanctioned in one way or another, most sex work takes place on the borderline of legality and illegality. Since information on taxation is public and the payment of taxes bureaucratic, a considerable proportion of those who sell sex do not pay tax on their income. Many professionals advertise their services indirectly on dating sites or work from leased premises, in which case suspicion of pimping falls on publishers and landlords. A foreigner may not obtain a work permit for prostitution, and so all those on tourist visas work without one. Those looking for clients on the street or in bars may, depending on one's viewpoint, be guilty of intrusively selling sexual services in a public place.

Legislation concerning the sex trade has been drafted with the aim of maintaining social order, and not to diminish the insecurity facing sex workers. To some extent this legislation even increases it. The law nevertheless defines certain crimes where criminalization is relevant from the sex workers' viewpoint. These include all forms of pressure and coercion, violence, pimping and human trafficking. **[47]**

The Penal Code's regulations concerning pimping (called pandering) were last amended in August 2004. The scope of pimping was expanded and aggravated pandering was added. Under the renewed law, pandering means activity in which financial benefit is sought from:
organizing a place for sexual services;

- accommodating sex workers as a part of business activity and in such a way that it promotes the performance of sexual services;
- marketing the contact information of sex workers knowing that it promotes the performance of sexual services:
- otherwise benefiting from sex work performed by another person or tempting someone into sex work.

In practice, the criminalization of pimping covers brothels and all organization and marketing of sexual services in which more than one individual benefits financially. There is little information on the impact of the law. Advertisements in magazines and on internet sites have become less outspoken and apparently it is more difficult to find apartments for pimping purposes (Seuraaja 1 2005; Sillanpää 2005). Extensive media debate on the issue in the early 2000s may also be responsible, in addition to the amendment to the law, for the caution exercised by landlords.

Legislative amendments have also resulted in a limited *criminalization of clients*. Buying sexual services from minors has long been illegal in Finland. The impact of this law is perhaps most clearly seen in pimping crimes, which have exclusively involved adult sex workers. However, there are minors among Finnish sex workers and it is known that some Finnish sex tourism involves buying sex from minors (Seuraaja 3 2005). The criminalization of clientship that came into force in October 2006 also in part concerns sexual services provided by adults when it involves pimping or human trafficking. By the end of 2009, a few sentences had been passed on the basis of the amended Penal Code, but this does not seem to have significantly affected the prostitution sector.

3. Stigma

"[The media debate on prostitution is] bullshit. Irritating. We're not victims of some pimping ring. No one's forced us into this work. And we're not oversexed, so that we do it with anyone, anytime, anywhere. You can enjoy doing this work, but it's not always enjoyable. The image the media gives of us is like as if we were spending all day painting our nails and sitting in fishnet stockings, suspenders and high heels waiting for someone to come and fuck us. And that we've got tonnes of money. [...] They don't see that we're people. The same as anyone. [...] Society can't accept us because it doesn't understand us. We're sort of weirdoes as far as they're concerned. [...] Or else you're pitied. They can't talk about it without starting to feel sorry for you or giving you advice or something. Because people can't understand, it gets stuck at that." (I, Taru.)

Stigma is the mechanism whereby a negative deviation from the norm is defined and assigned to the periphery (Goffman 1990, 9, 13). The stigmatized are not full members of the community but are regarded, and start to regard their own existence, above all through aberrant characteristics. Depending on the culture, stigmatized characteristics may be almost anything – for us in the West it covers ethnicity, criminality, mental ill health, poverty or sexuality that contravenes the norm. But not all difference is stigmatized. It depends on the situation in which the individual is something other than what their social environment expects. **[48]** (Goffman 1990, 16-17.)

In this chapter I look at the forms that whore stigma has acquired in Finnish society and how this stigma is manifest among sex workers, in the social environment and with respect to the authorities. Whore stigma has proved to be one of the most tenacious forms of social labelling in the Western world. Phil Hubbard (1998) describes how campaigns against prostitution often try to marginalize prostitutes socially and spatially. They are depicted as 'others', a group apart from other women that poses a threat to social morals. The point is not always to exclude, but instead, with the effort to avoid stigma, to control sex workers' options. Some sex workers also carry some other form of stigma and so are excluded from the formal jobs market, which in turn accentuates the lure of sex work.

We should bear in mind that in deciding to start sex work the prospective sex worker often has no other information to hand other than the general myths about prostitutes that have grown out of the whore stigma. Later in this chapter, however, I assume that someone taking up sex work must question these beliefs, and that there is in turn some sort of experience of otherness that precedes involvement in sex work. Finally, I consider the broader significance of the whore stigma as an instrument for controlling women's sexuality, how it prevents movement into the sex trade and from it to the category of the "respectable" woman.

Stigma is not only a matter of rejection by one's surroundings; it is a two-way process whose imprint deepens convolutedly. When someone deviates from the norm, they are rejected within their social environment. They are considered only from the viewpoint of their objectionable characteristics and all their actions are interpreted in such a way that they reinforce the presuppositions associated with abnormal traits. The deed (selling sex) becomes the permanent self (a prostitute) (O'Connel Davidson 1998, 43). Similarly, the attitude of the surrounding environment affects the behaviour of the individual who carries the sense of stigma, and it is as though they start to enact the prejudices that are directed at them.

Stigma differentiates, shuts out and turns one away from the community. It functions as a landmark between appropriate and inappropriate norms (Whelehan 2001, 31). When the mass media reiterates myths about whores, it simultaneously instructs people who are not sex workers (women) about how to dress and behave (Ryan 1997, 228-229).

For Émile Durkheim (1990, 85-86, 108) the definition of a crime is the thing that incurs its disapproval inside the community. **[49]** Actions that shatter norms vary from one society to another, but the otherness of the outcast is itself a permanent part of all communities. A crime is a violation of the

value system kept intact by society, and in this sense it is a threat to the community when an act that is defined as a crime intrinsically seems harmless. On the other hand, the experience of threat frequently reinforces values and therefore an act that contravenes the norms nurtures a feeling of oneness (Durkheim 1990, 108). The limits of what is permissible become apparent once they are exceeded. This is why the criminal both maintains and challenges the prevailing order. Kenneth Plummer (1975, 70, 121), in line with Durkheim, defines sexual aberrations as activity that questions norms into question. In this way anger directed at the transgressor serves to preserve the social order.

Whore myths

While the content of the label varies, whore stigma appears wherever there is sex work (Bindman 1997). Two myths about prostitution have dominated the media debate in Finland. The first highlights sex workers' links to international crime, while the second depicts them as victims of exploitation (Lehto 2006, 67). According to the crime myth, prostitution is more often than not bound up with pimping and drug crimes, disease and disorder. Typically, there is the powerful moral charge that sex workers are evil women who break up families and spread sexually transmitted diseases. (Lehto 2006, 43-44; Saari 2004, 60-62.) In the victim discourse, conversely, the women are innocent "sex slaves" produced by poor countries, driven into the trade as a result of ignorance, poverty and fraudulent enticement. Such women do not act; they are the objects of action. It is the duty of the civilized and bourgeois West to save them. (Lehto 2006, 35-37; Saari 2004, 84-84.)

It is characteristic of both myths that sex workers are understood to be other, beyond one's own community and realm of experience. Other stigmas, too, are incorporated into this construction of their otherness, principally foreignness and the illegal or perverse nature of their actions. Being already alien, it is easier reduce them to being victims or criminals. Sex workers themselves are naturally well aware of this universal image:

"And we prostitutes are targets of all sorts of racism. Because our profession isn't even accepted. That's to say officially this is not a profession. Many certainly reject our trade, not least other women... [...] And yet it sometimes feels strange that some person there is just chatting with me in a friendly way because they don't know that I'm a prostitute. It makes me wonder whether they would chat as amiably if they knew..." (F, Sara.)

"People have a totally wrong idea of what this work is, at least Finnish prostitutes. They think that we're some sort of dirty drug users, that we're victims and that we're oppressed." (I, Mimosa.)

The disgrace associated with sex work is apparent everywhere the subject is talked about. Prostitution is compared to an epidemic (Nykänen 2004, 46) and sex workers' rights of association are considered dubious (Reinboth 2003, A12). Because most sex workers keep their activities secret, it is very rare to hear of someone in the cultural mainstream having met any of them. Images are derived largely from fiction and the mass media. The multinational popular image industry also influences Finnish beliefs about prostitutes as underworld figures who are desperate, drug addicted and oppressed by pimps (Hubbard 1998). Politicians and the authorities adopt and reiterate these myths, and this naturally increases sex workers' mistrust of them:

"In an interview [in the news] a police official said that the police fear that criminals will come to Finland at the time of the games. 'We're prepared for prostitutes, money forgers, pickpockets and drug criminals.' Right, nice to hear that you're a total criminal and compared to drug dealers. On what grounds, I would ask." (F, Eeva.)

"I don't get it at all where these people's logic is. Sure, I get wound up sometimes when I hear my favourite politician Päivi Räsänen's remarks. [laughs] (I, Elina.) **[50]**

Victim-speak surfaces most of all in connection with cross-border prostitution, but because of the debate on human trafficking of recent years it has become a sort of general adjunct of prostitution (Malarek 2005, 276-288; Lehdonmäki 2002, 3). It is believed that people are driven into prostitution against their will and that selling sex causes appreciable mental harm in those practicing it (e.g. Auvinen 2006, C6). And so even official documents are able to describe sex workers as "emotionally amputated, because they have become used to keeping body and soul separate". (Spanger 2003, 192-193, Gould 2003, 289-290.)

Johanna Sirkiä (2003, 15) writes of how the victim myth functions as a means of exercising power: "The victims themselves as the subject have no say in how their problems are defined, classified and solved on their behalf." As is typical in the construction of regulations hinging on the victim perspective, while breaking away from prostitution is supported (or planned to be supported) strongly, the refusal of sex workers to quit is more stringently punished. (Scoular & O'Neill 2007, 773). They end up being charged not only with endangering public order and morals but also of casting doubt on the sexuality considered appropriate to women.

The absence of the voice of sex workers in government work concerning them has been glaring in Finland. For example, when the former National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health carried out a study on prostitution not a single sex worker was included, neither among the writers nor experts involved in preparing the study (Turunen 1996, 5).

When a Ministry of Justice working party heard evidence from a sex worker as well as from other quarters in its deliberations on criminalizing clients, an editorial in Finland's leading newspaper expressed disapproval (Human trafficking, pandering and prostitution 2003, 7 (in Finnish); Sundberg 2003, A4.)

The victim definition is justified on the grounds that it does not put the blame on prostitutes in the same way as more standard talk of criminal or sinful women. The old division of good and bad women is nevertheless also evident in the victim discourse. Petra Östergren (2003, 63-65) has criticized the lack of solidarity shown by politicians and feminists in Sweden towards prostitutes and sees it as part of the stigma surrounding "whores". Women of "ill repute" are demonized and punished in different ways. The whore stigma is so pervasive that a person who may ordinarily support marginal groups will not necessarily even notice that the discourse on prostitution shames and offends sex workers the worst.

"I find that at the moment it's terrible, you could say that all politicians are against prostitutes and it's a totally assimilated thing. They don't really think about the issue one bit. It's like it just arouses such strong feelings because it's been fed to them since childhood, that it's bad and wrong and oppressive and so on. And I've come to another conclusion, that it's not necessarily so simple. Sure, there are obviously plenty of miserable stories and so on, but it's not really the whole truth." (I, Susa.)

The myths about prostitution are repeatedly being thrown into doubt by international empirical research. Efforts to dispel the victim myth behind the arrival of sex workers from the Asian and former Soviet areas have been considered racist (Murray 1998, 60). Assumptions about the risks of infectious diseases associated with commercial sex have been shown to be misleading, at least when the negotiating position of sex workers in relation to clients is strong enough. Instead, sex workers are the most aware of all the sexually active population groups when it comes to the techniques of and need for safe sex. (Hubbard 1998; Pheterson 1996, 34; Momocco1998, 179-180.)The weakness of prostitution studies that reinforce old myths is not therefore their focus on the most problematic elements of commercial sex, rather that the problems are blithely generalized to apply to all paid sex.

Meanwhile, the literature also includes empirical material lending evidence to support prevailing myths about prostitution. Scientific research is the child of its time, and when it comes to marginal groups it is largely tied to conventional beliefs.

Perhaps the most quoted study of sex work in the Anglo-Saxon world is Cecilie Høigård and Liv Finstad's book *Backstreet*, which is based on interviews with 26 prostitutes. Most of them worked the streets and half of them had a drug habit. Høigård and Finstad's study is a prime example of how old preconceptions can prevent us from hearing the sex worker's voice in a qualitative interview. Despite the interviewees' explicit references to social stigma as the reason why they felt bad (Høigård & Finstad 1992, 108), the authors disregard the social context and direct the harm they perceive (which is universally experienced in the same way and has a consistent impact) purely at the sex act's transactional terms. The interviewee's comments on the positive sides of their work are presented only so that so that social workers could find ways to get women out of the trade, because…"no one 'wants' to rent out her vagina as a garbage can for hordes of anonymous men's ejaculations." (Høigård & Finstad 1992, 76, 180.)

Nowadays, research on prostitution has increasingly shifted from the area of criminology to the medical and social sciences. These consider the prostitute as someone who has been forced to sell sex (women from poor countries) or who gravitates towards paid sex that repeats the experiences of subjugation of their traumatic background of incest, rape or violence (Western sex workers). For example, Kathleen Barry defines victimism as objectification, which fails to recognize the will and activity of its object, but in the same analysis she dismisses the professional pride shown by the sex workers she met as merely a defence mechanism against a given negative identity (Barry 1984, 44-45, 120). **[51]**

"Some take the line that I should be saved and put into rehab, that I'm definitely – I saw just this sort of trendy term on the web – a sex addict. OK, I'm not taking a stand on this, whether I'm one of them or not, but I anyway should be put into rehab and should be saved etcetera. Then if I try to explain that 'no, I think this is a really good thing and I like this and it's nice'. So then finally its 'Okay, what meds are you on, what drugs have you been taking?'" (I, St.)

Even in the very questions it poses, research, too, is pervaded by stigma, the focus consistently being placed on socially condemned models of behaviour. Positing anything comparable of less stigmatized groups would be considered baseless or at least out of the ordinary – it is much rarer to find a study, for instance, on the criminality, sexually transmitted diseases, drug addiction or perversion of "wives" or "sociologists" (Pheterson 1996, 31.)

Everyday stigmatization

Text messages that Ariel received in 2006:

It's anyway really pathetic if in Finland a woman sinks so low. Whores are the lowest beings. I hope that your next client is some psychopath!

No self-respecting woman becomes a whore! […] Do you imagine perhaps that someone sometime will take a filthy whore like you as a wife…?!!

Hopefully you'll realize and kill yourself before one of your customers does it and gets the blame for it! There should be a bounty on your head!

Not all sex workers are equally exposed to the hazards of stigma. Much depends on how publically they have to do sex work (Plummer 1975, 77-79). The foreign element in conspicuous prostitution (on streets and in regular bars and erotic bars) stands out partly because the sex workers do not have to fear labelling in terms of their families back home. Finns more generally work anonymously over the internet.

What do sex workers run up against when it comes out what their profession is? The consequences may be tangible exclusion, such as unjust treatment by the police (I, Sirkka), loss of training place (I, Tiina) or being banned from a hotel (I, Tiina) and nightclub (I, Tiuku). Many of those interviewed who work on the street or in bars had experienced ridicule from outsiders, been spat at, threatened and treated violently.

Sex workers' clients partake in commercial sex, but at the same time they carry around general myths about sex workers. For sex workers the client relationship is the main point at which stigma is actualized, particularly because those working indoors do not usually perform the role of sex worker in other contexts. In addition, client conceptions of sex workers largely derive from images created by the media and fiction. The majority of clients buy sex rarely and most sex workers tell as little about themselves as possible during transactions. This is why not even frequent buying of sexual services will necessarily be enough for someone to question their own presuppositions.

By Gerda's account, the association of prostitution with Russians is evident in Helsinki's street prostitution because many clients are surprised that she is Finnish, even though Estonians, Russians as well as other Finns work the streets. When the sex worker revealed that she is Finnish, the client's next assumption was that she was a drug addict. Why else would a daughter of the welfare state sell sex?

"It seems that people know so little about what whores are nowadays that everyone imagines that they're addicts." (F, Iina.)

"Totally idiotic session… One took a whole hour (totally impotent) and then spent the whole time reading my palm, 'Oh, oh, oh, oh, tut, tut, tut, you'll never have children, oh oh oh life's so terrible, oh oh… Another idiot came straight to the door asking if I've got HIV and do I do drugs…. golly, talk about dregs! (F. Sofia.)

"[The client] was alarmed at some bruises on my legs and because of that changed his mind and started babbling something: 'You must have lived a tough life?' I gave him back half of the money because I hadn't had time to do anything except get undressed, but it got me thinking. Sometimes when I'm in a hurry I bash my leg on the doorjamb and corner of the bed, but it doesn't make my life tough." (F, Aura.)

The victim myth is mediated via the behaviour of men. Sex workers encounter confused clients who fantasize about having sex with prostitutes, while convincing themselves that sex work is basically unpleasant and demeaning:

"Every now and then one of these clingy types comes along, who wants to 'save' me from this misery." (F, Maisa)

"Generally they just think that a prostitute is a victim and [clients are often concerned that] are you sure now that you like this? Can you enjoy this? How can you like doing this? And isn't it at all disgusting? They might ask. Or then desperately want some kind of assurance that now it really is OK, that you're not disgusted or you're not feeling bad in any way." (I, Susa.)

Because sex workers are perceived only in terms of their work, their personalities are taken away from them. Their identity is supplanted by myths that circumscribe and deny them other roles as mothers, brothers, students, religious believers, bookworms or party animals (Compare Järviluoma et al 2003, 64.) In client relations, seeing the seller in the seller's role is completely understandable and is largely the case in other service professions. But unlike other professions, sex workers are assumed to be only prostitutes and to lead only a prostitute's life outside work, too:

"I was asked what I needed so much money for and how many DOZENS of 'hits' I have a day. Uh-oh. 1-3 a week is my normal rate." (F, Irene.)

"Yes, when I did only house calls men would phone me and say come here right now… I said this isn't some pizza service with one-hour delivery guaranteed. And that it would be better to make an appointment beforehand as I've other things to do than to wait around at home 'on call' ." (F, Sara.)

The sex workers I interviewed stressed that the majority of clients are well-behaved, ordinary men. Not all are, though. At the top of the list of unwanted clients are the "stinkers" (bad hygiene), "hagglers" and "psychopaths" (potentially dangerous) in addition to "suits". This does not mean all clients in suits, but men whose approach to the seller comes across in a negative sense as objectification:

"Have you noticed that certain 'suits' are kind of self-centred and imagine that you should even bring them their shoes from the hallway. I had a man like that yesterday. After the business, he ordered me to bring me his shoes, and I said no, because no one wears shoes indoors in my flat… and then he said forget it, get me a glass of water! Hello. Where did he think he was? In some hotel […]? Just like I was some kind of servant. So they probably think that when they get sex and pay for it then you put their shoes on for them and bring everything they want." (F, Iina.)

"I hate it most of all when someone just comes and it's all the same to him whether I've got brains or not. It's really the most disgusting of all. I don't take these types again a second time. In some way there's the attitude that 'this is a whore, you can do anything you want with it', yes, it's really terrible." (I, Nelli.)

It is rare for clients to be violent, but it is precisely these kinds of men, who treat sex workers degradingly, that are also potentially dangerous in the opinion of sex workers. Underlying this may be the assumption that the desire among some clients to abuse and degrade is founded on the denial of prostitutes' human dignity (I, Minna). This attitude is rooted in the critical cultural stance on commercial sex that is fostered, perhaps first and foremost, by the Christian tradition, and also by the secular ideal of emotional commitment in a monogamous heterosexual relationship. Feelings of sinfulness can strike even during the act:

"Clothes off really quickly and straight to business, waits a minute, huffs and puffs, and then sits on the edge of the bed mumbling to himself: 'This isn't going to work, there's no point, I knew that I shouldn't have come, this was a mistake, a bad mistake…' I'm amazed and wondering what'll happen now. 'You see I've these morals, no I've got to go, this was a bad mistake, well you got your money easily enough….' blah blah. All the while pulling on his clothes." (F, Maisa.)

"Before coming to bed he prayed and after that he prayed for his sins to be forgiven and for this sinful woman and then he started preaching to me. […] Then when the tax refunds came through he came to ask – you wouldn't mind again? What a hypocrite, Jesus!" (I, Yritteliäs.)

Meeting with clients is perhaps the most usual but by no means the only time when stigma becomes tangible. Many established institutions sustain the view that sex workers are a problem group separate from the rest of society. Among the material I have collected are accounts of improper treatment of sex workers by the police and the media and of direct harassment. For example, during a visit to her health centre Helmi was forced to admit to selling sex. At first she was suspected of using drugs, but in the end prostitution was put on her patient record as a symptom of her nervous condition:

"I've come across notions that prostitutes are bisexuals, but this – that prostitution is a mental illness is a racist highpoint of medicalization! […] Somehow I want to get back at the medicalization of prostitution so much that I feel like writing to some newspaper. But that's just the problem: 'who believes stories of madness told by someone who's crazy?'" (F, Helmi.)

Cultural assumptions are compounded by legislation concerning the trade. Sex work is not illegal in Finland but there are many circumscribing laws and regulations linked to it. It is typical of legislation concerning prostitution that – because of insufficient or distorted information – regulatory laws for safeguarding the autonomy of sex workers have quite the opposite effect. For instance, the criminalization of prostitution or its peripheral aspects has further increased marginalization, while regulations blocking mutual collaboration among independent sex workers have strengthened the position of pimps. **[52]** (Zats 1997, 300-301.) The social labelling perspective opens up opportunities to see forms of abuse that have not been talked about before. In many countries sex workers' children are denied citizenship, hospital services or the right to attend school. Sex workers themselves have been the victims of coercion, violence and rape by officials and have had no real possibility to lodge protests against their treatment. (Pattanaik 2003, 315; Debnath 2006, 29.)

"Well, that's what it's like because with these stupid laws, doing paid [sex work] at home you get evicted or paid sex is made a crime… it just makes everyone insecure. I've not noticed that the laws make anyone safer." (F, Iina.)

In Finland, the impact of prostitution myths on the attitudes of authorities is seen particularly clearly in situations where much is left open to the discretion of officials. Most painful are those women's stories of how sex work – even if it was occasional and happened long ago – influences child protection authorities' rulings on who is fit for motherhood. During my research I came across a few cases where a sex worker's competence to take care of her children was called into question. In three of these cases the only given reason was selling sex. Filing a child protection report could result from a woman wearing revealing clothing, visiting strange men in hotel rooms or getting into cars.

"No one can show in any way that I'm in any respect a bad mother or bad guardian or that it makes me inept at looking after children. Like most other parents I work outside the home, and while parents are working, children are in municipal day care and there's no reason to suppose that the child is in any distress." (I, Maija.)

When sex work casts doubt on a person's right to care for their own children, we are entering an area concerning the most basic of human rights. In Gayle Rubin's view (1989, 290) sexual control is at its strongest in proximity to educational institutions. Sexuality that deviates from the norm is often interpreted as a sign of bad parenting, but also of inappropriateness, for example on the part of a teacher for his or her job. The more a person can exercise power over the coming generation, the less their opinions and behaviour are allowed to depart from the norm. **[53]**

Because of stigma it is not usual for sex workers to tell anyone about what they do other than in appropriate contexts. This is often not even necessary, as at least part-time sex work takes up only a small portion of one's life and time. But sometimes the neighbourhood gets to know about it. In this case even those working in private premises may face the problems of an intolerant environment. According to my research, disturbances usually include minor acts of harassment but they sometimes involve efforts to evict a tenant.

When stigma is located away from official institutions, it becomes invisible and elusive. Veera relates how after starting sex work her neighbours one by one stopped greeting her and that there was an attempt to evict her and her partner. Kaarina's neighbour would phone her up at night and complained to the police, and Ramona's neighbour locked the outer door of the apartment block on several occasions so that her clients could not leave. Iina's rental agreement was cancelled:

"Some very nice person had made an anonymous complaint that I was causing a disturbance. Right, I caused a lot if disturbance – others can party, but no screwing. (F, Iina.)

"Years ago, someone wrote 'whore' on the stairway of one of my colleague's and drawn an arrow pointing to her apartment. She obviously had a place in the wrong part of town. There're plenty of nasty people around." (F, Sara.)

Sex workers tell their families and friends about their work only after being in the trade for some length of time and when it has become pretty much full-time. This involves much guessing and anxiety about this disclosure and the attitude of one's family and friends. Naturally, some sex workers never tell anyone.

But, once they've got over the initial shock, relatives and friends have often accepted the situation. Perhaps knowing a person well enough is sufficient to break down stigma. There are also sex workers, though, who have had to choose between the acceptance of someone close to them and sex work. Maija told her father about her sex work and has not heard from him since:

"I knew that by telling him I'd make him angry. But I maybe didn't expect such an extreme reaction. I reckon that it went against his morals and whole outlook." (I, Maija.)

"No sooner had I told her [a best friend] that I'm bisexual and that I'd bought this SM studio, than she was already ok with the whole thing." (I, Ramona.)

It's particularly hard to start up and maintain intimate relationships. Taru was sorely offended that her former partner was ashamed to introduce a prostitute to his family or friends, and as a result they hardly ever went out. Tiuku had to break off a relationship that had started well, because her partner had seen her at work on a street of ill repute. Sirkka thinks that if she began dating, her boyfriend would find it hard to accept her work. Doing sex work also complicated Lilja's previous relationship.

"My former promising relationship broke up because he couldn't stand my work (at the time I was 'only' doing massage), even though at first he said that nothing bothered him because I was such a lovely woman. But he couldn't take it on an emotional level. I've almost given up hope of finding a partner for as long as I do these jobs, though occasionally I also post ordinary dating ads." (F, Sara.)

Experience has taught sex workers that the most important criteria when choosing a partner is what their attitude will be to sex work. Some have succeeded in building a steady relationship outside their work, but this has required negotiations and strong motivation. Even then, it's a problem to combine home and work.

"Even though a couple of my exes (those I've lived with, not ex-johns) accepted my work fairly well, during every argument I would always be called 'whore'. What's more, I had to deal with the split very carefully and consider every move so that there would be no grudges or bitterness to make the man want to mess up my life (as there were the means to do so)." (F, Aura.)

One obstacle to dating concerns the different notions of what forms of interaction are acceptable only within a couple relationship, since sex work fits badly with the ideal of the monogamous partnership. In principle, however, the legislation on pimping makes living together difficult, because household members are dealt with as a single economic unit and the whore stigma extends to family members. I am not aware that Finnish law on pimping would apply in such cases, but in France it is common for family members (mainly male) who depend on the earnings of a sex worker to end up being accused of pimping. (Pheterson 1996, 44.)

Stigma is not always present in the form of discrimination or negative presumptions. An overzealous interest on the part of the public and the press is one aspect of stigma, even when the attitude is one of positive enthusiasm. From the sex workers' perspective, positive interest comes about in the same way as negative interest – from erecting a myth in place of the individual's personality – and it is thereby equally excluding:

"When you tell people what you are, their response changes immediately. Their attitude changes. They find it so fascinating because it's so sinful. 'Tell me more for goodness sake. How do you operate? Go on, how?' Blah blah blah. Because before they know, you can talk about anything with them and it's really wonderful to talk. But once they've heard what you do for work, they no longer see you as a person. They see you as some sort of sex bomb." (I, Taru.)

In Finland, as elsewhere, there has been a debate in recent years about prostitution as a profession. Unlike with most other areas of work, sex work has been depicted in these discussions as fun and problem-free (Saari 2004, 90-92). But even in this talk idealizing sex work, the seller is often just a passive object waiting for action by the authorities on such things as legalization of brothels and compulsory health inspections. The approach prevents sex workers from being able to seek help and improve their working conditions almost as effectively as the more negatively tinged victim and criminal myths.

The double life

Most sex workers I've met evade the whore stigma and keep their activities secret, at least in some contexts (compare Meretrix 2001, 132-133). In practice this means using separate work cell phones and business names, some of them for working abroad. Some wear wigs or other disguises. The internet has transformed the terrain of commercial sex and has essentially made it easier to work anonymously. Sex workers no longer need to be on duty in public places in order to get clients.

"Then when the internet came, yes it was terribly easy to do a homepage, exchange ideas anonymously and take anonymous phone numbers. You can play around using a pseudonym the whole time." (I, Per.)

Maintaining secrecy is justified by "people's prejudice" (I, Kaarina). For Sirka (I) it is precisely secrecy that is the most difficult thing about the trade, in order not to be labelled as "trash". Many declared that one of the reasons they do not pay taxes is the fear of being socially labelled, as tax data is made public. **[54]** Not paying tax, however, continues the cycle of secrecy and marginalization.

"Then again if I think from my parents' point of view, well my parents were all the time wondering how I managed to have enough money, so you have to invent something about where the money came from. Explaining that took up a lot of time and energy." (I, St.)

"The fact that you have to do this secretly (and be scared shitless), because of landlords and the taxman (as long as I didn't pay tax I couldn't legally market my services in Finland, and I couldn't rent a work place!)" (F, Maisa.)

When I asked about the downsides of sex work, all the interviewees referred to the stress and practical complications of keeping things secret. If sex work takes up a large part of one's life, it easily leads to creeping sense of isolation and of losing one's life outside the job.

"I think that selling sex full time is an excellent choice for some people at a certain stage in their lives. But I fear that if you get totally absorbed in this profession you unavoidably face a frightening isolation. I noticed that during this year I withdrew slightly from social contacts, which I don't like at all. The fact that you have to keep it secret also leads to isolation and the risk is that your existing relationships wither completely due to the secrecy." (F, Jaana.)

"If for instance I went now in the evening to the bar on the other side of the street to sing karaoke, and if I started chatting with people there, I wouldn't be able to talk about my working day like ordinary people do: 'What a boring blow job!'" (I, Leenu.)

Sex workers' opportunities to reflect on their activities are limited because of stigma. Sex workers can discuss their profession only with a few people, and even the available written material merely offers a few of the necessary ingredients for building a positive identity. The image projected by the media is so far from the daily lives of people selling sex that it too does not offer enough substance for any sort of self-understanding. At best it just compounds their confusion and sense of isolation.

"For over half the time that I've been sexually active, I've been whoring. On nights like this a sense of doubt hits me about whether I'm after all in my right mind. The smart me says that it's the conception constructed by society, while the me who yearns for affection and thirsts for acceptance is horrified at what I've chosen to do." (F, Irene.)

"I feel that I'm a really complete person and I like myself a lot. I have good self-esteem and I don't really understand when someone says that when you go down that road you destroy yourself, or some such." (I, Susa.)

In addition to being a barrier to building one's sense of identity, secrecy also makes it hard to untangle the situations encountered at work. Because prostitution contacts are often very socially and emotionally demanding, situations cannot be talked over, difficult matters pile up and work quickly consumes one's energy:

"When you're in this line of work, you should be able to talk about these things, just like the police talk. You can't let them into your head or your soul; you have to get them off your chest." (I, Taru.)

Neither can sex workers count on law enforcement in the sorts of situations that other people do. Mistrust of the authorities is strong and accounts of bad experiences spread through the commercial sex field like wildfire. Sex workers seldom report minor crimes:

"How many times have I been robbed doing sex work? I haven't gone to the police. What's the point? You can't go to the police if you've been beaten up when whoring." (I, Yritteliäs.)

"For instance, if I have some problem at work, it's pretty hard to get help anywhere. Say some client comes and steals something from me or assaults me, I wouldn't dare call the police." (I, Veera.)

"Since this life isn't too easy (at least for me), my lawyer tried to persuade me to go to court again concerning the rape. I have a doctor's certificate to back my case. The lawyer's aware of my work and so now is wondering whether to proceed or not. It's going to be a tough ride if I go for it – and yet. A prostitute is also a human being with the same rights as anyone else. The right to refuse something or call it off. But to go to court to demand it? Scary." (F, Ansa.)

Politically active individuals are required to make public appearances under their own identity in Finland. For sex workers (excluding a number of exceptions) the individual risks of civil initiative outweigh the benefits that can be attained. Johanna Sirkiä (2003, 15-16) criticizes the victim myth because, through it, sex workers have been silenced in the social debate about them. Krisse has noted the same thing:

"I somehow felt that my autonomy is being limited in that when you're suddenly labelled you don't have any other alternatives. But this has been my own choice. I could have decided otherwise, but I've opted for this by myself and I want to do it this way and want to be involved in this. I feel that it's like I'm being made stupid because I can't say anything. I feel I'm being denied the right and power to decide what I do." (I, Krisse.)

One crucial consequence of stigma, then, is that any attempts by sex workers to debate the problems of the profession are blocked by the assumption that personal characteristics prevent them from rationally assessing their own situation. And due to secretiveness, it is rare for sex workers to publicly voice any criticism of the whore stigma. Jo Doezema, a former sex worker (Interviews Chapkis 1997, 182) relates how people are unshakably attached to whore myths. Even meeting a sex worker fails to make them question their own notions; they just assume that they've run into an exceptional case. In Doezema's opinion, the sex workers' human rights movement's idea of using public exposure to tear down stigma does not work, or not as straightforwardly as was first thought. Patricia Whelehan takes up the same issue:

"If prostitutes like the sex they have with their clients or enjoy their work, they are 'deviant,' statistically 'insignificant,' or 'nymphomaniacs' [...] If she doesn't like the sex or the work, and she is not supposed to like the sex or her work, then she is 'frigid,' 'a lesbian,' or 'a victim,' regardless of the reason why she dislikes her situation." (Whelehan 2001.)

Multiple peripheries

Whore stigma and its consequences are not identical for everyone working in the sex trade. Much depends on the sex worker's individual resources, the attitude of their social environment, and how central a part selling sex plays in their life. It is easy to conceal occasional sex selling and it does not entail nearly the same stress as efforts to separate full-time sex work from the rest of one's life. We might assume that with an increasing open-mindedness about sexual questions there would be a lower threshold for sex workers' to tell those around them about their work.

Some sex workers also carry another stigma (Pheterson 1996, 70). Marginal groups based on a certain ethnic background, gender or social class are over-represented in sex work and run into the whore stigma more easily than others. In particular women from Eastern Europe are easily labelled as sex workers in Finland. The Finnish sex worker St relates how men think she looks Slavic and because of this she is often asked about sexual services:

"[Men in bars] think that I'm an Estonian or Russian, which makes them suppose that I'm a prostitute. They come and chat to me in English, like 'hi, do you want to come with us' and blah blah blah. Then according to how I feel I may say in Finnish 'yeah' or 'no', so I can sort of choose and decide myself." (I, St.)

Double stigma means that control mechanisms related to different stigmas are simultaneously directed at an individual. For instance, the whore stigma intertwined with foreignness concerning Russians serves to increase their vulnerability. In the Aliens Act, which came into force in 1999, suspicion of being a prostitute is one of the grounds for being refused entry to Finland. One consequence of the section of the law that deals with refusal of entry into the country is that border control policy seems to be increasingly gendered: at the border every woman coming from a former socialist country is a potential prostitute and therefore suspect. According to the section on pimping of the amended Penal Code that came into force in 2004, renting an apartment for the purposes of prostitution can be interpreted as pimping (Penal Code, Chapter 20). The amendment made it harder to rent apartments for use as brothels, but it also increased discrimination within the property market against all Russians and Estonians – as tenants they appeared to be potential operators in the prostitution racket. (Kontula 2005, 24).

Some sex workers experience what it is like to bear the whore stigma even before having their first client. According to Gerda's mother, a "girl who goes to church on Sundays" has to be a "whore or mad" to run away from home (I, Gerda), and this is what the social welfare authorities write in their documents. Tuk, from Thailand, found that people in Finland constantly called her a whore when she and her husband were walking down the street. Because the task of stigma is to function as a means of social control, we can assume that carrying the whore stigma would already lower the threshold to taking up sex work.

On the other hand, the marginal position of certain stigmatized groups in society generally and particularly in the official labour market increases the attractiveness of sex work. The labelling of conspicuous sexual minorities makes it harder to find employment: "The only alternative for some transpeople is prostitution or poverty." (F, Eeva.). The characteristics rejected by mainstream society can be productized as fantasies: transpeople become 'shemales' and an immigrant 'an exotic woman from the Orient'.

So, double stigma opens up some possibilities but in doing so it closes others. It is easier for a Finnish, female, heterosexual sex worker to break down the prejudices directed at her than to have to dodge the pressures of other stigmas in addition to doing sex work. Leenu describes how hard it is for people belonging to sexual minorities to build up credible social activity:

"I still carry one stigma and carry it with pride. Say what you like, I'm not going to feel ashamed. But when there are two stigmas, it's as if both of them are bearing witness against me. Because there's this prejudice against transpeople that it's a question of sexual immorality. And if I've now succeeded in refuting it, and that it's not an issue and that I want to live as my own gender identity and then started to be a prostitute, then there's the danger that someone will construe that what I've said earlier is not true. 'Ah-ha you changed sex just so that you could be a prostitute.' That sort of accusation of immorality. And then the other way round. They say that prostitutes are all victims of some psychological problem, incest victims or psychopathological in other respects. Then if it came out that there was a psychiatric diagnosis of transsexuality, it would be sort of 'oh right, we said that they're all mental'. Because both are to do with sexuality, though in slightly different ways, then you get the feeling that if you reveal both at the same time I'll never have any credibility again. It'll be easier to accuse me of being some psychopathological case or immoral or something really awful that destroys gender morality and healthy sexuality and everything. To my mind I'm not at all." (I, Leenu.)

Double stigma can also mean otherness within the sphere of commercial sex. If creating a positive identity is difficult for female sex workers subject to social mystification, it's even harder for male prostitutes whose existence is neither remembered nor recognized at all (Whelehan 2001, 126-127). Male sex workers are usually outside the relief work and peer group support networks that exist for female sex workers.

In addition, the hierarchy within the profession, which is mainly based on the remuneration from clients, places sex workers in unequal positions. Of all women who sell sex, street prostitutes bear the greater burden of whore stigma (Chapkis 1997, 103). Finnish sex workers are in a position to demand higher wages than those of other nationalities and are otherwise better protected from stigma. Men work for considerably less money than women.

It seems to be common for there to be elements of double stigma at play in sex work. People from the mainstream of society rarely end up in the profession. All the sex workers I interviewed were already on the margins of society even before they started out. By this I mean that, broadly speaking, they had some experience of life lived outside the community and beyond conventional precepts.

Table 4: Interviewees' (sample of 25) experience of otherness before starting and during sex work

		Before taking up sex work	Since taking up sex work
Childhood	Feeling of being an outsider	17	
	Strict rules at home	8	
	Poverty	11	
	Bullied at school	10	
Sexual identity	Experiments deviating from the heteronorm (SM, bi, etc.)	4	2
	Transperson	3	
	"Whore"	11	6
	Sexual activity	7	1
Other	Being foreign	6	1
	Substance dependency	2	0
	Authorities doubt parenting ability	2	2
	Eating disorder	5	
	Other mental health problem	6	3

Based on the table above we might suppose that that there are grounds for the pathologization of sex workers, and that exceptionally many people who were psychologically damaged early on in life enter the profession. But if we look at the quality of these experiences, they are, almost by the nature of their arrangement, the kind that lead to sorts of traumatization that are considered minor. It is therefore impossible to estimate how far the experiences of marginalization depicted by the sex workers differ from the life histories of non-sex workers.

This leads us to another possible interpretation. Though the question is somewhat to do with the usual experiences of otherness, the people I interviewed have responded to them in a particular manner. They learnt already at an early age to defy the social system. "Once you've been a weirdo it's easy to do other weird things." (I, Krisse.)

This interpretation supports the view that instead of concealing painful aspects of their life history, sex workers are ready to describe them spontaneously, and particularly in relation to overcoming the stigma attached to sex work. Sex work appeared feasible to them because they had previously made extraordinary choices. The majority of those interviewed stressed that they had felt strong feelings of separateness even in childhood, "walking your own path" (I, Veera) or "following things from the sidelines" (I, Susa).

"I've never belonged to any herd. Because girls are usually in a gang, well I've never belonged to anything. [...] In a way all my life it's been the same to me what others do or think, as long as they leave me alone." (I, Maija.)

"And I've never felt sympathy towards the strongest group or the majority. To my mind, they are pretty moronic. I was bullied a lot at school, so I felt that they were stupid. In some ways it was hurtful and upsetting, which is why I've always been defiant." (I, Milla.)

The experience of a sense of separateness concerning one's own personality crops up in the material I collected more than any other single background factor. **[55]** It is not always easy to determine how much it was a matter of the child being withdrawn or of being shut out by their surrounding environment. Many of those interviewed were bullied at school and had few opportunities to have a social life, for instance because of being poor and having strict rules at home.

"I wasn't directly bullied, but I was victimized because I looked strange. I had ugly clothes and never fashionable ones. Because already then it was terribly important, you had to have certain kinds of clothes." (I, Mimosa.)

"That was exactly the problem, because I never went anywhere so I couldn't make friends with anyone. Because of this I was totally left alone, I was just there at school and I didn't really know anyone." (I, Elina.)

"I'd been bullied at school, felt that I was different and abnormal. I did my schoolwork conscientiously and tried to keep up with everything nicely. But it was just this sort of social coping." (I, Leenu.)

But being an outsider is not always experienced negatively. Kaarina thinks that her loneliness as a child led to her tendency to enjoy reading. The interviewees describe the feeling of being different not only as something that was imposed but also as a spontaneous and welcome option:

"I'd always been a different sort of child. My siblings weren't – they are kind of ordinary, but I've always been an extremely independent type. I remember that even when I was really small I had this feeling that I wanted to be alone at home. I thought it was lovely when I could be alone – even when I was in first grade, if I could be alone at home even for a little while and everyone else was out I had this fantastic feeling. Like, now I'm my own master and I can do what I like." (I, Susa.)

"Being at home on weekdays, I've always loved that – like now [at the time of the interview]. Other people are in factories or offices, and I'm at home. I've written a story about it. […] I've never pitied those 12-year-old latchkey kids who social workers now put into day care – goddam it. I think it was wonderful to be a latchkey child – I could be alone in the house or out with friends." (I, Siveyden Sipuli.)

Sexual identity that departs from the norm and attitude of one's surroundings may, as with the experience of difference in childhood, be positive and/or negative from the individual's point of view. Tiina has found that the allure of SM has given her much pleasure and helped her get to know about her own sexual identity, while on the other hand the negative sides are mainly to do with the practical problems associated with being in a small locality:

"You definitely become labelled, getting the handcuffs out from under the bed. Which one fits and is that alright? I'll do it to you or will you do it to me? You get labelled like mad for this, I know it. And it's incredibly hard to get used to it." (I, Tiina.)

While deviating from the norm is depicted as being more or less down to your own decision, stigma and its effects are not something you have control over. For instance, Tiuku is biologically a man but lives as a woman. To her mind, she has finally reached a balance with her gender identity, but the choice has left her isolated. Tiuku would like to start dating but thinks that no man could stand the feeling of shame:

"It is terribly important for a relationship what people think or the opinion of those around you. To date me publically the way people normally date would be an awfully big challenge for a man, whether he could – because it's not like I would pass for a woman. What man wants to declare this sort of trans relationship? No one, from what I've seen." (I, Tiuku.)

Though in the media sex work is linked to substance use and violence, they did not feature prominently as stigmatizing factors in the material I gathered. Two of the sex workers told me that they had been raped and two had experienced domestic violence. Substance addiction was also reasonably rare. **[56]** However many had generally had some sort of mental health problems in their lives before they took up sex work. The most usual were eating disorders (anorexia and bulimia), followed by the difficulties of gender identity experienced by the three transpeople I interviewed. Depression was talked about to some extent on the sex workers' online forum and a few divulged that they had suffered from it from time to time. The age and gender of the interviewees had an effect on the incidence of mental health problems, in addition to stigma, being considerably more usual among female students than among men (Student Mental Health Services… 11-12).

None of the sex workers I interviewed had had any first-hand information of the benefits and drawbacks of sex work when they made the decision to start it. Only Tiuku and Ramona had been given some guidance from a professional at this stage, whereas all the others had the same general preconceptions as any of us when they decided to enter the field. Despite this they were willing and able to doubt the validity of the coverage of prostitution in the media, otherwise they would not have taken the risk and decided to give sex work a try.

My interpretation of the material is that the whore stigma is such a socially powerful label that being able to cross the threshold required some previous experience of marginalization. The "labelling" experienced prior to sex work is commonly to do with some sort of personal characteristic that led to an individual being typecast, and who then noticed that they could live with it. Of course, a characteristic that marginalizes does not in itself explain why someone starts sex work, but it may explain why stigma lowers the threshold for some and not others.

Crossing the border between the respectable and the disreputable has required some exterior catalyst, in addition to the experience of marginalization, such as an offer by a client or knowing other sex workers. Other sex work researchers have also drawn attention to the importance of this sort of networking as a factor attracting people to sex work (Murphy & Venkatesh 2006, 134).

"One fuckbuddy, who I made a home video with, said why don't you try this, because you know you've got money problems… I put in an ad and it was then that I realized that this suits me." (F, Iina.)

"Then I met these Finnish prostitutes. Before, I too had this very typical image that they were all in some way crazy drug addicts or something, but I changed that view completely when I heard of the sort of clients they have. I got really interested." (I, Nelli.)

Though starting sex work already entails some degree of questioning of the whore stigma, the first paid act rarely meets expectations. Sex workers describe their feeling of bewilderment after their first client. They had been surprised at how "easily" it went and how "ordinary" the man was. (Høigård & Finstad 1992, 22.)

"The first time I was terribly nervous and scared. We did it together with my friend, received the client, and it was really good, because the fact that you're touching another person when you're wearing little, to touch another person in an erotic massage, yeah it feels kind of strange. But when you get used to it, I noticed that I also like it. I didn't find it at all unpleasant." (I, Krisse.)

The significance of the first client is also seen in the fact that many sex workers' organizations make a clear distinction between members who are genuine sex workers and those who are classed as 'allies' (Mensah 2006, 10; compare Goffman 1990, 40-42). Underlying this division is the assumption that even a brief experience of sex selling predisposes one to stigma on the one hand, while on the other it provides something of the kind of understanding that long-time supporters (often researchers, social workers and NGO activists) do not have. Even sex workers from different cultures understand one another on quite a separate level (Laliberté & St-Jean 2006, 43). The first client functions as a gateway between two different realities.

Demarcations

In addition to sex workers, the whore stigma restricts those who baselessly come under suspicion. In particular, there are the crossovers between "respectability" and "sinfulness" that provoke embarrassment, when non-sex workers are asked for sexual services or when one encounters a sex worker with a pram in the apartment building. The situation is illustrated well by the furore made by female residents in the Helsinki district of Kallio when, due to the increase in street prostitution, passers-by would be approached and asked how much they charged. According to a survey carried out in the area, respondents "in many of the open answers described the *shame* and negative feelings equated with it, a feeling of inferiority, the experience of diminished human dignity and that the annoyance is offensive." (Koskela & Tavi & Tuominen 2000, 71, see also 60, 65.) Street prostitution, precisely because it is so visible, easily stirs up residential activism (Chapkis 1997, 141). In these conflicts the prostitute (and their client) is negotiated and repeated as the immoral other, who must limit their own habitat to the exterior (Hubbard 1998). In the same way one's own community is constructed as the respectable, regulatory and normal.

"The sameness/difference opposition provided the framework for derivate couples inside the category 'woman': good girl/bad girl, Madonna/whore, normal/abnormal, licit/illicit, wife/prostitute, as well as the high and low images that have fragmented and categorized the female body. The first in the couple is the determining site, the site of presence; the second is the determined site, the site of the other." (Bell 1994, 40.)

According to Gail Pheterson (1996, 14), acceptable femininity is based on heterosexuality, marriage and reproduction, while prostitution defines bad femininity. **[57]** This is why the issue of prostitution is so crucial. The dichotomy stigmatizes the bad woman, but equally delimits "respectable" women, who in order to sidestep the whore label have to repeatedly prove that they are not whores. Then too, when a woman does not act in the commercial sex field, she makes choices and controls her behaviour in relation to the possibility of falling under suspicion.

The whore stigma thus functions as a gatekeeper in both directions. To begin with, the threat of it raises the threshold to sex work or any other activity that might arouse suspicion of disrepute. Second, it labels the sex worker, for whom a return to respectable female roles becomes difficult. From this perspective it is all the same whether the sex worker is depicted as a criminal, sinner, disease vector or victim. What is crucial is that the sex worker appears as the other, the reverse of the ideal sexual relationship.

The theory also explains why the majority of feminist movements examine commercial sex from the standpoint of general gender equality rather than sex workers' everyday lives. Radical feminist theory, in particular, separated women into two kinds: players who are active and aware, and those who are passive. In protecting its own rear from the whore stigma, radical feminism perpetuated the victim-making of sex workers, thus perpetuating the Madonna/whore dichotomy (Ryan 1997, 46).

Whore stigma has altered greatly in the course of history, but from one century to another the whore symbolized important social demarcations. Marx (199, 76) cited prostitution as a symbol of alienated capitalist labour, and for many feminists prostitution depicts the position of all women under patriarchy (Millet 1971, 37). **[58]**

Until the arrival of the contraceptive pill, the control of women's sexuality acted as a guarantee that private property passed from the father to his biological son. At the same time, women's most important social task was to give birth to children and protect the family, both of which were threatened by women's sexual activity. Traditionally, the whore stigma applied to every woman who started having premarital sex, extramarital sex, sex with more than one partner, sex following divorce or after the death of her spouse, sex with a member of another ethnic group or the same sex, or had sex that was other than vaginal intercourse, for instance oral, anal or SM sex. Often, the mere suggestion of sexual initiative, knowledge or proficiency was enough to cast doubt over a woman's honour. (Pheterson 1996, 66.) When a woman transgressed sexual morality, it was of no consequence whether she did it for financial or some other reason. And yet the link between money and sex is not always stigmatized; it can constitute a perfectly legitimate basis for marriage.

However, the whore stigma in Finnish culture, at least, no longer labels all sexually active women. 'Prostitute' has been narrowed down to mean someone who has sex within terms of transaction. This relates to a broader shift in sexual morals. In place of sex practiced in the missionary position within the marital hetero relationship, sex that serves the female orgasm is now bound up above all with the romantic couple relationship. It is permitted for women to have consecutive sexual relationships, to vary their sexual practices and have same-sex sex (Saarikoski 2001, 186-188). Sex work remains alone, representing bad and dangerous sex, as the opposite of nice, clean domestic sex.

Sexual norms do not come about by accident. They are tightly bound up with other social changes, particularly those concerning the position of women. In the Finland of the 2000s middle-class woman are expected to go out to work: the domestic goddess and backbone of the family has become an economically profitable player. At the same time the importance of the family has diminished as social services have assumed responsibility for many of the obligations traditionally shouldered by women in the domestic sphere. So concern about women's sexuality is bound up less with family and relations and more with their position as a labour resource. It is not dishonourable to have sex but it is wrong to ask for or receive money for it. In this manner the whore stigma becomes an instrument of social control in another way: the whore stigma that is legitimized by research, public prejudice and legislation deflects attention from the thing that is common to working class women, namely the demand for economic, social and sexual autonomy.

Though on the other hand the whore stigma remains strong, it does not work as effectively as in the past. Changes within the sex trade – particularly with increased mobility and new communications technology – erode the barrier between the respectable and disreputable woman, making it easier to move from one role to the other. Some sex workers go abroad to work simply to conceal from their friends and relatives that they sell sex (Spanger 2003, 180), and when client relations are established anonymously over the internet, it is no longer necessary work on the street or in a shop window. (Bernstein 2007, 473.)

Earlier in this chapter we also saw evidence of stigma erosion in the attitudes of the friends and family of sex workers. Contrary to what many sex workers have feared in advance, family member and friends adjust to the situation (compare Mattley 1998, 151). If someone has been long known in other roles, it is not easy to reduce them to the one-dimensional myths of the whore stigma:

> *"My friends are nearly all long-term ones I've had since childhood, who know me as well as I know them. Because they've always known that I've done things a bit differently, it's been quite easy for them to understand and find the thing even more natural than if for example I worked on the checkout in a shop." (F, Aura.)*

> *"[My mother] spat at me and shouted that she 'didn't bring a whore into the world.' But the next day she called and apologized for everything. Since then we've been in touch much more than at any time before." (I. Nelli.)*

It is also worth bearing in mind that stigma has certain positive effects for sex workers. Stigma is largely to be thanked for the social and health care assistance prized from decision-makers that is especially targeted at sex workers. The myth of prostitutes from the East carrying diseases has prompted clients to use condoms and in this way the health risks of sex work have perhaps been lessened. The gatekeeper effect of stigma also keeps the numbers of sex workers small enough so that the "sellers' market" endures:

> *"On the other hand it's a plus that because prostitutes are terribly despised and people are terrified of them there isn't much competition. So I don't really know if I would desperately want to change this situation." (I, Mimosa.)*

It is because of stigma that sex work is constantly an issue that interests the media and the public. Though what is said is mainly objectifying and negative, we also find other tones, and at least some sex workers know how to make use of them as the ingredients for building up their confidence:

"You could say that at some stage, particularly when I started, I had this awful suspicion about whether there was something wrong with me and [and] will I get worse in some way; will I change? That sort of notion has gone. I feel that I haven't basically changed because of this and neither does it make me any worse. I'm not any more sinful or anything" (I, St.)

4. Work

"Sometimes I just want to open the door for the trick and say ok get your trousers off and hop into bed. I haven't got all day. And keep your mouth shut." (F, Iina.)

"The first time I danced in an erotic bar, I tripped up so that my tampon string showed for a second, and I got tipped a few euros. I'm still not all that good but stripping is more a sort of stretching." (I, Milla.)

Work is the context to which sex workers relate the decision to take up the profession. In this chapter I look at the attributes that commercial sex has in common with other types of work. According to sex workers, a good client relationship demands emotional, social and cultural skills. The main challenge is protecting one's private space, and succeeding in this requires clear ground rules for client contacts and the strict separation of private and working life. I will also illustrate the elements constituting the professional identity of sex workers.

Later on in this chapter I argue that although people start sex work for money, the majority are content with modest earnings and cash out the cost effectiveness of sex work in the form of free time. In addition to having more time of one's own, the attraction of sex work is the degree of independence within the sector compared to wage work that entails supervision. I conclude by considering to what extent we can speak of sex work as precarious work.

In Helen Ward's (2007, 17-18) view, seeing prostitution as work is hampered by the fact that such a multi-dimensional phenomenon does not find a single locale within the production structure. Using Marx, Ward differentiates between five positions of sex workers. To begin with there are those working in the world's millions of brothels, bars or otherwise working under pimps, who are *wage labourers* who sell their labour to capitalists for a fixed period. *Slave labour* takes place in the context of human trafficking. Sex workers who sell services directly to clients are small entrepreneurs who own or hire their means of production, for example internet connections, phones and working accessories. In this sense, they are classic *petty bourgeoisie*, although in practice the majority are in such a vulnerable position and so far from being middle class that they more closely resemble Marx's *lumpenproletariat*. Some sex workers, such as madams or the owners of small brothels, may also operate in *capitalist* roles.

Affluent social groups have, of course, always had servants and nannies, but for a long time most reproductive (care, nursing and domestic) work was located outside the scope of transactional terms. The growth of commercial sex can be seen as part of a broader tendency in Western countries: unremunerative work traditionally done by women is changing into paid work. **[59]** The involvement of women, and particularly those with families, in working life is closely related to the increasing demand for reproductive services and meeting the resulting labour needs. Sex is the last area of women's work that is most comprehensively moving into the market sphere (Thorbek 2003, 63).

What, then, does prostitution actually purvey? It's often said that sex workers "sell themselves", but the idea tells us more about the attitude of the speaker than about the sales event itself: once the deal has been agreed the client does not 'own' the seller. Because of this, it has been proposed that sex workers surrender the right to use their bodies for a fixed time. But this definition too matches reality poorly, because the pricing of commercial sex is already based in the first place on certain acts (intimate massage, oral sex, intercourse, submission, etc.) and not on time. Though many independent sex workers charge for time (another usual measure is the client's orgasm), the sex acts of the agreed period of time are precisely determined and extra services incur an additional charge. (Ward 2007, 16.) It is for this reason that I also examine *selling sexual services* in this chapter.

Based on the distinctions that Ward makes, it is evident that sex work can be scrutinized with attention to its inner diversity but as part of a broader work and economic context. Elizabeth Bernstein (2007, 475), for example, has drawn a connection between middle class women entering the sex industry with the weakening of their position elsewhere in the labour market: compared to men from the

same background who seek work, women are much more likely to find themselves in insecure low-paid work. Elsewhere, Brents and Hausbeck (2007, 425), who have studied brothels in Nevada, state that brothel services and the market have evolved in close connection with the rest of the region's tourist sector. In their view, the sex industry should not be studied in isolation from the rest of society as an 'other', but as an aspect of the production system and consumption culture of late capitalism.

But sex work departs from generally acceptable paid work at least in one respect: due to the stigma attached to commercial sex, most labour market mechanisms do not apply, or their impact is different. Social risks, for instance, crucially affect the relationship of the demand for and supply of labour. In addition, sex work is only loosely attached to the main labour market institutions, such as vocational training, labour rights and earnings-related benefits.

Feminist movements have demanded the recognition of the work that women do in the home, because the present juncture bolsters inequality and denies women basic employee rights (Finnish Unifem). Marxist feminism, particularly, stresses the incomparability between sex work and other (paid) labour (Sloan & Wahab 2000, 462; Nussbaum 1999, 291). The study of commercial sex as reproductive work brings into the open the similarity of problems and alternative options (West & Austrin 2005, 141; Kempadoo 1998, 3).

By contrast, sex work also reveals forms of exploitation between women. Due to Finland's strong public care sector, no market for immigrant domestic work has arisen, at least not yet. In many other Western countries sex work is closely connected with the other reproductive work done by immigrant women. They are recruited via the same channels and many women work simultaneously or consecutively both in the sex trade and in other jobs open to immigrants. The move by Western women to the formal jobs market has made it possible for women from developing countries, separated from their families perhaps for years, to work in the West in low paid, insecure and lowly appreciated jobs.

Emotional work

When sex workers talk about professional skill they speak very little about sex itself. Technical skill is not regarded as so important, or as Lilja puts it: "Sure, you learn pretty soon that it's from the front, behind or whatever". And yet selling sex requires a variety of emotional, social and cultural skills (Brown 2007, 410). A good sex worker is polite, friendly and makes the client feel special, even when it's not her best day. Gerda describes how this demands sensitivity and experience, especially with new clients. Sex is a private, intimate experience and usually the sex worker has to "read very subtle nuances to figure out what the client likes and what turns them on."

Emotional work refers to the ability to create an illusion for the client with the help of physical gestures and social proficiency (Pasko 2002, 55). **[60]** The difference between a sex work professional and an amateur does not lie in outward appearance, age or technical skill, but in the kind of experience they are able to offer the client.

"Most men who buy sexual services expect good service, courteous service. They want service that makes them feel special and unique. You have to give them time, you mustn't rush them. From the get-go I understood that these are feelings that are really really important to the man who has come to enjoy sex." (I, Tiina.)

"I never rush them. I let them shower first if they wish. I'll chat with them if they want. I'm happy to chat – first timers especially are like that, they're really nervous. Then when I chat with them they relax. Just small talk about regular everyday things." (I, Yritteliäs.)

Though the agreement is settled usually on performing certain sexual acts for remuneration, a successful meeting with a client requires other things. Buyers of sexual services who write on the Sihteeriopisto website describe the emotional nature of the work in assessing the "attitude" of the seller. "The right attitude" indicates friendliness, cheerfulness, attentiveness and a convincing performance of sexual pleasure. The right attitude on the part of the seller can make up for looks or shortcomings in experience, but the wrong attitude will spoil a sexual experience that is outwardly flawless. **[61]**

From the perspective of the sex worker, customer satisfaction is of course its own reward, but emotional skills are primarily used to make one's own job easier. Tending to the client from the outset reduces problems during the act itself. A successful client relationship begins with greetings:

"I always shake hands with the client. I shake hands with new people I meet for the first time outside of work too." (F. Irene.)

"I try to be friendly and chat for a while about this and that before any real action and give the impression that I'm an ordinary person in every respect and that it is safe to come to my place." (F, Aura.)

Sex workers learn emotional work in actual situations with clients. Over time, they develop their own routines, using certain tried and tested lines and gestures. Minttu describes in detail how she builds up a feeling of trust and spontaneity before the sexual act:

"I've fairly regular things I talk about with clients:
• I compliment them on some aspect of their appearance
• Pat them on the stomach and say it's lovely (except if it's really massive)
• Pat their non-existent stomach and say that you could do with eating more, boy
• I ask if there's anything that the client especially likes (in bed)
• Often something comes up about the client's stress at work or family life, but then it's the client who wants to talk about these things – I don't pry that much.
• I talk about my own situation in a roundabout way, though I'll certainly talk truthfully and accurately about what my favourite food is and so on – trivial things." (F, Minttu.)

The definition of 'emotional work' inherently implies that it has a market value. Skilled sex workers will know how to recoup their prowess financially. For example, sex workers say that many clients want an experience that resembles private sex as far as possible. Because the key token of this fantasy is mutual enjoyment, the sex worker shows the client that she is enjoying herself. It is not always a question of faking it, but also of actually visualizing genuine pleasure. One of the interviewees encapsulated this appositely by revealing that if you are able to get lubricated naturally or apply lube without the client knowing you can instantly increase the price by €20.

"Sure I'm just myself, I don't act except that I fake that it's really exciting if someone asks something like 'does my dick feel good?' – yeah, sure, it's lovely. Sometimes you get the feeling that men are really stupid when they ask such weird things in bed." (F. Iina.)

"Often, when I'm riding and my thigh and buttock muscles get tired, I just think to myself that it's like a workout – no need to trudge to the gym. The sounds I make are probably reasonably realistic. Yeah, and it's easy to work out your abs in the missionary position. When you raise your head and ass a little alternately the man thinks that you're really enjoying it, that you're really into it." (F, Heidi.)

According to sex workers, many male clients consider the seller's (genuine or skilfully acted) orgasm to be the decisive criterion of successful sex. The faked orgasm is a typical example of emotional work. The seller's orgasm gives the client the illusion of a sexual relationship in which both parties are motivated by erotic passion. Taru and Sirkka explain that when the sex worker's pleasure seems to be crucially important to the client, they produce a convincing orgasm, "because people are such that if they want something, then if they're fed they want, they'll easily believe it." (I, Taru.)

"They're kind of easy, though sometimes a nuisance, [these types] who insist on pleasuring me. It's boring to fake one orgasm after another, wondering what would be the right and convincing interval to come, and your clit aches from all that pointless and clumsy rubbing"(F, Maisa.)

"Pretty often, to show a client that I'm interested, I have to fake an orgasm, when I see that a paying customer expects it. But I find it kind of easy. In my work I'm always happy and sociable, smile and make small talk even though I might be having a bad day and just thinking 'fuck off." (F, Maikka.)

It's not uncommon for a sex worker to have real orgasms during sex work, but they rarely happen on demand. In some situations, professionalism demands that the sex worker holds back, despite the heat of the moment or allure of the partner. Faking it, in place of the real thing, can be a conscious strategy to preserve your professional detachment and maintain control. That way you can try to safeguard your own invulnerability when having intimate contact with previously unknown people. The sex worker may alternatively feel responsible for controlling the situation and that the client's enjoyment must take precedence. And if there are many clients, it may be a matter of financial necessity:

"If there're just one or at most two clients a day, then I can allow myself to come. But if there're more, then it just doesn't work. If I have two or three orgasms with the first and second clients then I'd feel that I couldn't take any more." (I, Minna.)

"I've always (as long as I can remember) had mind-blowing orgasms…With clients I try to think of something else so that I don't scream and go wild when I come. Sometimes the orgasm just happens and I can't do anything about it. Sometimes I've ejaculated… And then I wonder why on earth after 2 clients I'm totally done in…" (F, Sofia.)

The rationale of commercial sex is to earn as much money as possible by providing clients with an erotic experience with the least possible effort. As the professional guide written by sex workers (Safer Sex, Safer Sex Work 1997, 48-55, in Finnish) explains, professionalism in sex work means being able to control the situation, maintain a distance and minimize your workload.

Emotional work is a resource that sex workers utilize when dealing with clients:

"But where I've had really good feedback is because I give the Johns a willy wash, and I do it myself. That way I can sort of find out how sensitive a case I'm dealing with and above all check their hygiene." (F, Sara.)

"When I see that a trick wants to hold back [from coming], or to stop, etc, then I'll say don't, because it feels so goddam good just like this." (F, Anna.)

"I do most blow jobs with the client either sitting or lying on the bed. That way he can't easily push and I can control how deep I take it. Sometimes the client stands and I sit in front of him, but if he takes hold of my head, I take hold of his hands and guide them elsewhere (dropping the hint, but discreetly)." (F, Aura.)

The seller's apparent sexual enjoyment is an important component of sex work, but according to my findings another is the more general ability to quickly establish a sufficient degree of intimacy with a stranger to make sex possible in the first place. Though the stereotypical macho may be able to have sex anytime and with anyone, part of the sex worker's routine professional expertise is to win the confidence of the client and defuse his nervousness:

"I may stroke their back or stomach to get them to relax. This takes about a minute, but getting over shyness in other respects can take ages, which may then complicate the job." (I, Gerda.)

"Strangely enough, many [formerly impotent cases] started to get a hard-on during subsequent visits (they keep coming back once they've realized that I don't mind their impotence) and cases that were difficult earlier have become surprisingly easy after I stopped trying too much and realized that it's not my problem." (F, Aura.)

"It still didn't feel as if anything was happening to his penis, no matter how I tried to massage it. There was this nice, light background music on the radio. After it ends, the announcer says that was Eternal Erection. Absentmindedly, I repeat 'eternal erection' out loud, at which my client looks at me miserably and says 'If only this one would rise to the occasion'. I burst out laughing and have to stop working on his penis for a while. My client was also in hysterics. After a bit I continued manipulating his penis, successfully." (I, Kaarina.)

Sex workers who have frequent clients inevitably come across more difficult problems to do with sexual potency. Some 39% of 40-year-old men suffer from some degree of erectile dysfunction (Lukkarinen 2003), so it is hardly surprising that this is a pervasive concern when sex workers discuss their work. They say that some clients end up buying sex simply because they are unable or are too embarrassed to go to a doctor. In this case the expectation is not principally about pleasure but to tackle a problem. The sex worker's role therefore changes from being a giver of pleasure to being a healer, and sometimes the sex worker who treats it all in a sincere, natural manner can help out.

"Well, he [the client with a sexual potency problem] came to my place and I gave him a regular massage and then when it was time to touch his dick, it did start to become erect really well, as first I massaged the prostate area and then the shaft of his dick inch by inch and didn't start wanking it right away. I've found that this reduces stress. And my massage/massage oil also worked miracles. Then in the end it was wonderfully erect." (F, Sara.)

"I feel I'm doing something really good for those old men when I provide them with sex, from which they had been deprived. There may be people who reckon they're totally impotent, who have lost all hope of ever functioning again. Some come with assistive devices – they've penis supports of all sorts. And when you get things going it's really nice." (I, Tiina.)

There are also people who come to see sex workers with problems that are less directly to do with sexual services. The sex worker may thus end up providing sexual counselling for relationship guidance.

"Someone asked me how you should really get close to a woman, why she always rejects him. I asked 'do you always kind of get straight to the point when you both go to bed?' 'Well, yes.' And I said, 'Ok. There's a good place to start.' A woman needs more gentleness and attention. Or even make the effort to help with household chores in the evenings, things like that. And many listen really willingly." (I, Kaarina)

"I said that 'every woman is different, but no woman thinks that when you tweak their nipples and push their button, or clitoris, the engine will start up without any problem. It doesn't work like that, we're, you know, real people after all.' For older men, especially, who were maybe totally used to that sort of starter button business, it might be a bit of a strange idea." (I, Gerda.)

Some sex workers are proud of the fact that clients come to them for advice, but not all. Some feel that it causes scheduling problems. Taru finds such counselling work unethical because she is unqualified to do it. These different attitudes to clients' requests for advice indicate that it is not an established part of sexual services, rather a part of the emotional work that comes with it. Some have commodified

such consultations and charge for the time spent on them, but it is more usual that they deal with these requests according to the client and the situation: **[62]**

"If they want to talk, then I may take a quarter of an hour extra just for talking and chatting. Clients – yes, men, inhuman as they are – need to talk. They don't feel that they're treated with understanding, especially those with sensitive feelings, because it's not up to a man to be sensitive. But it's precisely in a situation where they're relaxed and have just come that they are, and they realize that OK this is working. I don't know how they are usually, but they've willingly told me what they think about life, family problems and 'how my wife doesn't understand me'. But there aren't many whose wives don't understand them. It's an old joke that that's what all men say. Most of them just wonder about the mysteries of life." (I, Gerda.)

Murphy and Venkatesh (2006, 141) write that on the basis of the material they collected in New York, women who sell sex for a living enjoy mostly the same conditions (independence/indoor work/using the internet) as those in Finland. They associate elements of healing, acceptance and psychological enjoyment with sex work. In the material I collect ed there is also much evidence of professional pride in dealing with clients. More important than the price is knowing how to hold a client's interest and sensitivity in assessing his needs. But success is never guaranteed, and the task is rarely easy:

"From the viewpoint of an employee, if I think of the sexual service I offer, then it's physically and mentally easy and enjoyable to do. While with SM and stripping I can never be sure if it's good enough. Sure, I can say to myself that it's good enough – a really good striptease – but I don't know whether the client thinks the same. Does he really think so? Does it turn him on enough to take his dick out and start jerking off?" (I, Tiina)

"ANNA: How do you know what the clients want – say if it's outside just the regular stuff?
MILLA: That's just the thing, I'm learning all the time. My friend advised me to 'listen to your whore's instinct' [laughs]. You have to follow your instincts and continually try to practice your people skills. And assume a bit and try to guess and then ask directly whether they've any wishes or questions." (I, Milla.)

The *whore's instinct* that Milla mentions closely resembles Pasko's (2002, 57) description of the sixth sense that sex workers who work in bars use to scan the expectations and weaknesses of potential clients. This ability facilitates the service that meets the clients' individual needs and so results in more earnings for the sex worker. The demand for sexual services is so extensive that there is no need to worry about whether or not any single client relationship lasts. Despite this, Kaarina stresses that a returning client is a matter of honour, and deserves careful attention. Her client only sees a small part of the sex work that goes on:

"You can't just get out of bed, your hair unwashed, no make up and the house uncleaned – I wouldn't take anyone like that. I go to a lot of trouble so that everything is in good shape when one of my clients comes round. And that I dress the way I did before. Then I need to be in a receptive mood – feeling good, happy and ready for conversation." (I, Kaarina.)

The concept of emotional work generally refers to Arlie Russel Hochschild's definition of the expression of controlled emotions, which has economic value. In his study of flight attendants, Hochchild separates physical work (pushing heavy service carts), mental work (organizing an emergency landing) and emotional work. The last of these "requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others – in this case, the sense of being cared for in a convivial and safe place." (Hochchild 2003, 6-7.)

Hochschild (2003, 187-189) believes that there are grave risks attached to emotional work. He argues that the use of emotions in contractual terms leads to the objectification of human relations and harms "real" feelings. Despite the fact that the supposed destructiveness of prostitution sharply denies any connection between prostitution and working life, Hochschild's views on the harmful nature of emotional work comes close to the claim that commercial sex has an alienating effect.

The situation of sex workers operating in Finland, however, differs significantly from that of US flight attendants. Hochschild developed his theory within a large enterprise in which the emotions of the employees were standardized by the management. According to Päivi Korvajärvi (199, 354), most subsequent studies of emotional work were done from the same perspective, with little attention paid to employees' own experiences and with the negative impacts of emotional work being overestimated. Some assessments state that an organization's size has a significant effect on how far management can regulate emotional work. In smaller units, procedures also define clients, colleagues, and the employees' own individual life history. (Seymour & Sandiford 2005, 555.) Moreover, studies of emotional work concentrate on mainstream professions and its mechanisms in lesser-known areas are only starting to be surveyed (Mattley 1998, 148).

Laura Agustín (2003, 385-386) and Wendy Chapkis (1997, 69-83), who have also looked at prostitution as emotional work, pay regrettably scant attention to the level of sex workers' autonomy. Sex workers operating in Finland are fairly free to choose their clients, decide prices and influence their working conditions. Though many of them are aware of the emotional risks involved in commercial sex, they nevertheless reckon them to be less than in other work that is available to them, which is mainly under the control of an employer. **[63]** Sex workers talk freely about the emotional aspect of their work, but it is not perceived as exploitation. Rather, emotional and social skills are viewed as resources that help keep customer relations under the control of the seller (Chapkis 1997, 75).

Setting limits

The risks of sex work most commonly relate to human trafficking or pimping. There are also other external factors that can limit your autonomy. For instance, many of the measures used by the authorities for controlling the sale of sex, or even to help sex workers, in reality weaken the social position of sex workers and therefore also their control over their own lives. **[64]** (Scoular & O'Neill 2007, 764; Mensah 2006, 19; Monnet 2006, 34; West & Austrin 2005, 143.) A central theme that comes up in my material on sex workers concerns the threats to how they manage their lives and work. This is particularly so in terms of the challenges in setting limits. The fact that sex workers have no supervisory employer allows them independence and options. They nevertheless have to devise their own ways of coping when problems arise. This naturally highlights their professional skills and experience. Since it is only rarely that they can talk about their work, they learn to circumvent risks from their mistakes. In time, sex workers establish their own limits and general ground rules, at least if they are to continue to sell sex. **[65]**

When sex is perceived to be work it is also dealt with as any other type of employment. This requires set routines (agreeing meetings with clients, showering, make-up, using additional personal lubricant), efforts to exert control over the act itself (what positions/words/tempo the client wants, how to get rid of the client as quickly as possible without suggesting haste, how to keep make-up and hair in order), and the routines afterwards for the subsequent return to ordinary life (showering, guided imagery exercises).

All the sex workers I have met describe what they do as work. For some, it is a matter of earning occasional extra income, but others construct a clear professional identity as a sex worker and regard their work as a rational career choice. The way the field is identified therefore depends on how long you have been selling sex, how large a role sex work plays in your life and how strong your connections are with other sex workers. Professionalism sets the tone for dealing with clients and places a distance between sex workers and the 'fallen woman' stereotype. Professional pride is also a motive for working; it

strengthens self-confidence and reduces the alienation of the terms of exchange. A professional approach to prostitution equally presumes and increases life management and the range of options available.

There are only a few common ground rules in commercial sex, which is why sex workers highlight the importance of individual solutions. Many of those I interviewed consider professionalism to be one aspect of, or even the condition for, continuing in the field, and that the seller must be able to set their own limits and stick to them. Sex work is generally a short-term career, which is why there are always comparatively many newcomers in the field. Clients are aware of this, and the inexperienced sex worker may easily end up being cheated. The greatest health risk and most strenuous part of the work is precisely that stage where you don't know your limits or don't know how to hold on to them.

"When I think of when I was young, when there weren't any limits besides my health, then it was all pretty tough on me. In a way I was all alone in the world, and then the clients were really nice. You could fall for someone every week. That it was psychologically so tough came as a surprise. Already then I should have realized that a client is nothing more to you than a client. But when you don't understand that – or you sort of realize it but don't want to accept it. It makes you feel sad and depressed. Yeah, it's important to have those limits, and even more so to follow them. (I, Taru.)

The experienced adult sex worker is usually very clear about both where their own affections lie and the limits they require for their practical security (O'Connell Davidson 1998, 66-67).

"It's important first of all to define what you want to do. And if there is something that you think is unpleasant, then you don't have to agree to it. You shouldn't start to do anything against your will." (I, Kaarina.)

"I thought to myself, yes, I can do this. I decided in advance what line I'd take with the job, what name I'd use, how I'd approach things, how far I'd be prepared to go in terms of services." (I, Gerda.)

Sometimes you discover your limits only after transgressing them. Tiuku, for instance, feels bad that she sometimes performs oral sex without a condom:

"This sounds really dumb, but I actually decide on the basis of the penis. If it's the sort of penis that I fancy or if it's unusually delicious, then I don't necessarily use a condom." (I, Tiuku.)

Over time, the sex worker notices that if they don't set their own limits, clients will endlessly drain them of emotional services, company, care, sexual speciality, and so on. Learning to say no is one of the most important survival strategies of sex workers. But it is not easy, because girls, especially, are socialized to be 'nice'. The thinking is that sympathy for the client goes together with the general service and 'the customer is always right'. Many sex workers start out when they are relatively young, and an age difference of, say, 30 years between seller and buyer can give the client a sense of authority.

In terms of your own welfare, it is nevertheless essential to know how to say no when it feels right to do so. Nelli explains how the professional is able to recognize this. At first, she found selling sex hard. Young and inexperienced, Nelli would receive up to seven clients a day. She became depressed and feels she drank too much. Over time, she learnt to listen to herself and her life regained its equilibrium. Milla also underlines the importance of limits. She never misses her breaks, even when it means losing a client:

" I don't know how many, at least four or maybe five hundred because I went to town to get something to eat. But if I'd had those clients when I was hungry and really tired then maybe they wouldn't have ever come back again. You shouldn't take clients when you don't really want to." (I, Milla.)

"Jesus, just now one client brought his TOOTHBRUSH and towel with him. This was the first time that I'd the guts to chuck the guy the hell out of my pad..." (F, Heidi.)

"It's deceptive how a person can be friendly but his company exhausts you. He uses you to fill up on all the things he doesn't have, and because the relationship is not reciprocal, you don't get anything except cash, which doesn't give you that deep staying power that spending time with someone else gives. In that situation I have to think whether I should limit it to an hour. Or can I take the exhaustion, and can I make the same money using up less mental energy?" (F, Jaana.)

It is not easy to draw up any generally applicable rules concerning the hazards of doing sex work. One person's traumatic experience may be another's positive exploit. Sex workers themselves also stress that everyone has to set their own limits about what sort of services to sell, how frequently to do so and on what terms. There is considerable room for variation, but what are important are personal delimitations. Though intercourse is the most common form of sex work, Ramona, for instance, does not offer it at all. But she has never found it a problem to agree to a client's request for a "fuck between her breasts", even though her partner forbids it. Externally set limits do not endure in practice.

"I protected my privacy in my work on the street in two different ways. One was that I didn't want to kiss the guys because I didn't see any reason to. The second was that I didn't have anal sex with them, because to me it's too nice. I didn't want dumb clients to spoil my liking for it." (I, Gerda.)

"I do as much work as feels good. When I get up in the morning, I know that roughly there'll be this and that fun thing to do today. And if I feel that today I can't be bothered to work, then I won't. I find it's really important to listen to myself and I really do – it's really important to me." (I, Tiina.

Having limits also greatly determines where sex workers sell their services. Some ask the client to come to their home because they do not want to waste time going to the client's home or to a hotel. Others want to protect the privacy of their home and under no circumstances give clients their address. Some find that bars are excellent places to find clients, because the price goes up when it is late and when clients are drunk. On the other hand, drunken clients are a problem in themselves:

"I can't work bars. I've tried a few times. I just can't. When people are drunk they think too much of themselves and they think they're more capable than they are. And if they don't get an erection then it's my fault. Which it definitely isn't." (I, Gerda.)

According to the interviews I conducted, a limit is also set between working and private life. Many wear different clothes when working than in their free time, and if clients are received at home, the space for work and private use is distinct. Bionda says that she has a separate bedspread for the bed to protect the bedclothes. At the end of a day's work, it is folded away in the closet, and the room is once more a young woman's flat. Erika distinguishes between commercial and private sex on the basis of the working equipment she uses: she does not count a sex service done using a condom as cheating on her partner, because it is not real sex as "between [her] and the client there's rubber" (compare Sanders 2002, 562-564.) Milla, too, separates sex at work and sex with her boyfriend. To her, one key difference is the emotional work included in the contractual terms:

"An ex-boyfriend, who knew that I turn tricks, always felt that I'd do something to another guy for money that I wouldn't do to him. I tried to tell him that it's acting. Anyway, I couldn't act in my free time. It's quite heavy going. I like getting paid for it. It's to do with the fact that I get paid. Even though it's fun and nice and so on, it's anyway to do with the fact that I get paid. I couldn't do it for free in my spare time." (I, Milla.)

Even though separating work and private life is important to the seller, not all clients – according to what sex workers have experienced – feel a corresponding need to differentiate between private and bought sex. In such situations the interests of the sex worker and the client may be at odds with one another, even though the client may, in his own view, behave impeccably and feel that he's been excellently served (Oerton & Phoenix 2001, 394). A good example is the two opposing views of the same appointment that came up in the material I collected. In the first the buyer relates that he is the ideal customer: he treats the prostitute as a girlfriend, first takes her out to eat, shows interest in her and makes love to her slowly and attentively. But the sex worker says of the appointment with him:

"A really tiresome punter. The whole evening was wasted eating and fucking, and the condom chafed. Then he was inquisitive all the time, even though I said that I don't talk about my private life when I'm working. I saved his number on my cell phone so that I wouldn't ever answer it." (I, Minna.)

The sex worker also has to be able to spell out the limits to clients as well as to herself, because since sex falls within the private sphere in the cultural mainstream, clients don't always perceive commercial sex within contractual terms. If the client treats the sex worker as a potential girlfriend, he's probably an undesirable customer.

"I had some guy call me up who sounded all nasal. First he asked the price and so on, then if I'd go for a coffee and anyway get to know him first, but for free. No one goes to the hairdresser and says 'seeing as you're so expensive, would you be my friend then you can cut my hair for free'. I must've answered pretty bluntly." (F, Irene.)

"I get a lot of guys who ask me out to eat before getting down to business. They generously offer to pay for the meal… Yeah, right, I spend about three hours with a client eating and fucking and for that I get what I'd generally get for a normal fuck. Some people just don't understand that this is a job!" (F, Janina.)

"I don't do house calls any more because they make me feel unsafe and I don't feel in charge. Also, sometimes when I do house calls they want way too much intimacy and prepare food, drinks and want it to be just like I'm some wife or girlfriend." (F, Iina.)

Sex workers are not always willing or able to draw a clear distinction between working and private relationships. Though it is more probable that it is the client who takes a fancy to the sex worker, sometimes the seller gets smitten with the client and dreams that the client relationship will turn into a romantic one. It is also common for sex workers to contact regular clients for reasons other than sex. Yritteliäs sometimes gets tickets to gigs from her regulars, and Per uses the relationships she has formed through sex work in her proper day job. Sometimes, clients offer to do small services on top of or in place of payment, helping with renovations or making purchases. When St. wanted to install a larger than usual bathtub, one of her clients helped her with the planning:

"Surprisingly many of my clients are in the building trade or have something to do with construction. One of them did the calculations for the carrying capacity of the floor – 'if we distribute it like so, then it'll take the weight.' Then I'm like 'that's great'." (I, St.)

I had one regular today put in a scratching post for the cats + he put up proper mirrors in the bedroom. Another of my regulars is always available if I need, for instance, help assembling furniture, painting, etc. […] Then there's this taxi driver who'll come from far away to drive me free of charge. Oh yeah, and there's also a car mechanic who does the scheduled maintenance on my car for free." (F, Heidi.)

Some sex workers accept clients' offers of assistance and consider them as a natural perk of the job. But others think that such an arrangement is problematic, as it blurs the boundary between the commercial and private and makes it harder to refuse to socialize outside the terms of exchange:

"I don't accept any help from clients. Many have offered to help with all sorts of things. Once, earlier, I accepted an offer of help. For instance, one client got me a new kitchen table, but I gave him a reduction on the sex. I don't want to owe a debt of gratitude to anyone." (F, Janina.)

The friendly client can become a threat, or at least an emotional burden, if he tries to intrude more widely into the sex worker's life than she is willing to allow (Pasko 2002, 61). Many clients would like to buy the fantasy of a romantic partner (compare Brown 2007, 417), known as the *girlfriend experience* concept, and which in Thailand, for example, apparently makes up a significant amount of the commercial sex work directed at tourists (Åsvik & Åsvik 2004, 49, 67-68, 79). The sex workers operating in Finland whom I have met nevertheless take a lukewarm view of the idea. Some of them sell escort services, but in this case, according to the sex workers themselves, socializing revolves around non-romantic small talk and sex. Occasionally, clients nevertheless become infatuated and want to "save" the sex worker by making her their girlfriend, regardless of whether she thinks she needs to be saved.

"It's hard to explain, but you just have to take a businesslike line. Be friendly, but maintain a slight distance. Make it clear that you like the work and chat nicely but don't give away too much about yourself. With time you learn it, though even an old hand can't always stick to all the limits. [If someone gets too familiar] then you can make up some story about a boyfriend, if you can't think of anything else." (F, Sara.)

Clients' readiness to help out in various ways shows that the boundary between commercial and non-commercial sex remains indistinct. On the other hand, there are men who hang around sex workers and who perform chores simply so that they can get to be part of the exciting life of a prostitute. A man may well be smitten, but in some cases I would interpret the object of the affection to be more the mystification of the whore in general than any particular sex worker. Jaana has a name for men who embrace this groupie-like role: *whore addicts*. When a sex worker ditches a whore addict, the punter goes off in search of a new target for his affections **[66]**

Professional ethics

Electing limits is not just a matter of safeguarding your own welfare. It is also an aspect of professional ethics and of dealing with clients. Of course, the professional ethics of sex workers are not institutionalized in the same way that those of physicians or journalists are, but in the commercial sex sector too there are certain standards for what constitutes exemplary or reprehensible behaviour. Minna emphasizes that only the well cared for and self-respecting sex worker is able take pride in the service she offers.

The less selective a job is in terms of qualifications, due for instance to the low degree of education required, the harder it is for the worker to commit to the job and find motivation. Sex work differs from many other forms of work in that outside the client relationship the worker rarely receives feedback or admiration for their professional skills. When sex workers highlight their professionalism, at the same time they motivate themselves for an activity that is not socially legitimate. Your own ethic is created within the trade and adhering to it is a matter of personal honour. Ethics involve such things as friendly customer service, safe sex and mutual trust. Certainly, these standards are continually being broken but they endure nevertheless. In the following Iina expresses regret for not managing to give an unpleasant client his agreed half hour:

"Almost every other [client] I get is some dirty type and because of that I sometimes lose all interest…Or then I put up the price. I'm just so fed up with those sacks of shit. Was it wrong of me to kick the guy out after 20 minutes?" (F, Iina.)

Professional ethics are also defined through their negation. The belief persists within the discussion among Finnish sex workers that their Russian colleagues take clients on a 'conveyor belt' basis and because of their haste provide an inferior standard of service. Furthermore, they consider that the signs of a bad sex worker are distrust, greed and carelessness about safe sex. They also think that working while under the influence of alcohol or drugs is inappropriate.

"A bad sex worker is just like in the movies, a sour-faced whore who drags on a smoke while someone fucks her and then kicks the client out when it's done." (I, Siveyden Sipuli)

Few sex workers would want to see themselves as sour-faced whores, rather they take feedback from their clients seriously. Leaving aside make-up, accessories, manicures and pedicures (on which all sex workers spend money to a greater or lesser extent), sex workers use time variously to take massage courses, learn about bondage or playing doctor and nurse or to study sexology. Deepening your sexual expertise may also serve your non-commercial sex life, as is the case with Siveyden Sipuli's massage skills. Even those sex workers who do not sell sex on a regular or professional basis may thus have motivation to broaden their skills. Clients rarely give feedback (according to the sex workers I interviewed), but you know you have succeeded when a customer returns for more.

"I was there. I took good care of my clients. I acted properly, knowing my own limits. […] I think that it's to do with professional pride, and I needed to know that those people who come away from my place feel 'Wow. Great' and 'Whoa'." (I, Gerda.)

"It was a nice start to the week that a long-time regular came and brought lollypops." (F, Eila.)

Professional ethics are built up primarily through interaction with other sex workers, but those who work in isolation also have a very similar notion of what constitutes good and bad sex work, so at least some of the norms probably transfer via shared clients or from the cultural mainstream. It is important for Tiuku to be a "good whore" to the extent that she may return the money if she thinks that a client is unsatisfied:

"Yes, I take these appointments with clients seriously. Sometimes when its been that the client has left unsatisfied in some way or in a bad mood, so yeah it's got me down and I've taken it hard. But maybe with time you don't take it so hard." (I, Tiuku.)

Of course the ethics of sex work entail that both parties adhere to the contractual terms, but when it comes to safe sex, for instance, ultimate responsibility lies with the professional. There are very few sex workers who do not want to use condoms, and therefore the negotiating position of women in a particular culture is generally directly reflected by the statistics on sexually transmitted diseases related to commercial sex (Brussa 1999, 19-20). **[67]** Sex workers in Finland are in a reasonably good position and as a result there are no references to commercial sex having increased STD prevalence. But the readiness of sex workers to perform safe sex is not based purely on self-preservation; it is also to do with the safety of the client and possibly that of his partner.

"But it's mainly that I'm more afraid that someone'll get an infection from me than that I'd get a disease from someone. If I was diagnosed with HIV now, I wouldn't be so terrified that I'm HIV positive, but rather I'd be terrified about whether I'd infected someone." (I, Tiuku.)

So, apart from being a rule dictated by practicality, safe sex is also an ethical choice. The same applies in the commercial sex arena to another generally recognized ground rule, confidentiality. As Taru puts it, "You don't greet clients, you don't remember them and you don't contact them." The sex workers I met never told me the names of their clients or any of their identifying traits. This was their strict rule even though the interview was completely confidential and most of them were prepared to disclose even highly delicate matters about themselves. Of course, protecting clients ensures that the client relationship continues and that there is reciprocal confidentiality on the part of the client, but it is also a question of actually protecting the client and of professional pride:

"[Men] talk about really sensitive things – so it's strange, when you have this thing connecting you… how it is that someone really talks about their private life. That's to say in such a way that they don't even talk about these things with their good friends but will talk about them to a prostitute. It's an honour in a way." (I, Susa.)

"I've got a certain professional ethic in that I mustn't identify clients, and I mustn't tell others about them. So that they come again." (I, Lilja.)

Professional ethics may also involve physical protection, especially concerning potentially dangerous special services. To clients sex is purely recreational (though many sex workers have themselves tried out buying sex), and so the know-how needed for safety has to come from the seller. Tiina, who provides domination, is an example of this:

"I always put it like this: the only thing that's dangerous here is me. And it's true. I've always got to see to it that the client is safely secured. If there is a risk that he faints, I have to make sure he won't collapse anywhere and that he'll stay in the chains that I put him in. You've got to constantly watch the client, and if I take away his senses so that he can't hear or see, then he's completely in my charge. I've got to keep a grip on things all the time so that I know what's happening." (I, Tiina.)

Sex workers have a clear idea of what the service they provide should be and how it should feel. This is one aspect of their professional ethics. Milla will not take a client when she is not "in the mood" in case the level of service falls below her own standards.

"[When I came] home the light bulb had blown and the whole place was totally dark, and I didn't feel like going to the shop. Then a certain regular of mine called and said that I'm near your place, can he come. I lost my nerve and said that now's not a good time, but I said it in such a way that I didn't sound like a bad-tempered old woman. Then I had to vacuum, do the dishes and wash the floor. And the regular just kept calling for the next hour and would have wanted to come later, but I don't want to take anyone if I'm in a really bad mood, because I'd only make them feel bad too." (F, Iina.)

"I took a day off today. I'd arranged with a client already last week to meet today at 12, but I felt so depressed that I simply couldn't show up. I called and explained the situation. I've just lain on the sofa all day crying. The phone was on in the morning and was ringing constantly. So there would have been clients. But I can't do this work when I'm depressed." (F, Janina.)

In this sense the information I gathered differs from some previous research (e.g. Oerton & Phoenix 2001, 398) in which sex workers talk of switching themselves off for the period they have sex with clients to protect themselves from the psychological damage of prostitution. I did come across mention of how sex workers might think of the morning's news broadcast or a shopping list to do for the next day to take their mind off things when they are with a boring client. But this was not a matter of a systematic mechanism of self-protection, or at least it was not perceived as such. If sex workers do not feel emotionally on form in the terms of exchange for sex, they simply refuse to take clients.

Cost-effectiveness

An obvious motive for selling sex is financial problems and large disparities in income in society. It is natural to assume that poor people more easily turn for financial security to ways of making an income that are scorned socially. Recent trends following the breakdown of socialism suggests that the explanation is viable, as the gap in the standard of living along the Eastern border fundamentally altered Finland's commercial sex sector. In just a few years, at first an independent and then increasingly organized business swept into Finland from the former Soviet area: topless waitresses, erotic dancers, porn and prostitution. Poverty, the relative big sums available and the invasion of market thinking made sex work an attractive option for women of the former socialist countries. (Penttinen 2004, 296-297.)

Within the globally extensive sex trade we routinely find poverty and large income gaps. In many cultures sex work has been the only or the most effective open way for women to earn money. With sex work you can support your family, educate children, obtain a reasonable amount of property and the security in old age that it brings, and in some cases even some social standing. **[68]**

As with any other service work, commercial sex permits the client temporary and limited command over the sex worker. Social, political and economic circumstances determine what other options the sex worker has and the extent of the client's power. Not all sex work is linked to absolute poverty, but in much of the world the alternative to sex work is poverty, violence and even death. Occasionally, as in Finland, the alternatives extend to monotonous low-paid work. It is highly unusual for rich and influential people to opt for sex work.

And yet sex workers who operate independently can enjoy a solid financial standing and their scope for life management is largely comparable to many socially acceptable professional groups. Whelehan (2001, 121, 130) distinguishes between middle class career prostitutes and working class survival prostitutes. According to her evidence, the way the two groups approach prostitution differs from one to the other. The Californian career prostitutes she interviewed identify themselves as entrepreneurs or artists, while survival prostitutes say that they started out in the profession because of poverty or the threat of it. **[69]** Middle-class sex workers often work for escort services and are white, while the survival prostitutes are from ethnic minorities, work the streets and as a result are more likely to be arrested or be discriminated against.

I did not come across such a division in my own findings, but the two approaches that Whelehan describes are certainly present. The sex workers I interviewed come from different backgrounds, but what they have in common is that they saw sex work as an alternative to work in the badly paid and strictly controlled service sector. Although sex work may, in addition, later continue as a middle class profession resembling a lifestyle choice, the sex workers had their first clients at a time in life (for instance when they were students) when jobs with reasonable working conditions were unavailable to them.

In Finland, as elsewhere, the main reason for taking up sex work is because you need money, which is the case with paid work in general. This was so particularly during the economic depression of the early 1990s, but the same applies to the influx into the sector in the economic boom period of the early 2000s.

"I needed to make a fast buck. At that point my studies were at quite an intensive stage, so I simply wouldn't have managed – I'd done a lot of odd jobs, waitressing and so on, but you don't make much that way." (I, Susa.)

"Well, of course one reason I do this work is the money. In fact it's now the only one. I'm such a lazy person that if I could get the same amount of money without working then I'd probably not work at all. I'd just draw and take it easy somewhere in town. But the reason why I now like doing this work is mainly that I can decide for myself what I do. No one can make me do anything that I don't want to do. I don't have a shitty boss unless I happen to have a shitty day." (I, Ramona.)

A principle rule of the labour market is that the pay you receive for work corresponds to the esteem attached to it. However, demeaning and stigmatized sex work can, in theory, generate more income than a GP earns. One sex worker, who is a university graduate, says that if esteem is measured in terms of money "My pussy is about ten times more valuable than my brains." (I, Minna.) A full week's work can bring in a small fortune:

"It was a total surprise how quickly business picked up. I started to earn incredible amounts. Like forty thousand [Finn marks] a month was a walk in the park. I was making really big sums of money." (I, Lilja.)

While the social appreciation and income level of sex work may not match one another, within commercial sex networks they nevertheless go hand in hand. Fees can vary greatly: an appointment with an individual client may range from just €20 for oral sex to €1,000 for an escort service. Sex workers have a hierarchy, of which price levels are a fairly direct measure. As a rule, foreigners earn less than Finns and are employed more often in regular 'company for afternoon coffee' prostitution. In general, Estonians are able to ask higher prices than Russians. Expensive and special services requiring particular skills (SM, escort, etc.) are priced and esteemed more highly than regular prostitution.

Weatherall and Priestley (2001, 332) do not consider sex work to be an attractive alternative partly because, according to their research into prostitution in New Zeeland, income remains below the national average. However, in light of my evidence this does not hold. In Finland, too, many of the sex workers I met earn less than the average income, not due to the lack of opportunities for earning more, but rather because they prefer to cash out the cost effectiveness of sex work in the form of extra free time and/or because sex work is just one source of income among others. The majority of sex workers I met take clients according to their own financial needs, for instance to cover occasional expenses that exceed their regular budget, from getting eye glasses to fixing broken domestic appliances.

We should also remember that sex workers do not usually compare their income to the statistical average, but rather to pay in the service sector, which at that point in their lives would be the realistic alternative. Few would manage in practice to do sex work for eight hours a day. What is more usual is that full-time professionals take one to two clients a day, for which they make about €2,000 a month. Because in most cases they do not pay tax, their incomes are appreciably higher than, for instance, the starting pay in the real estate or nursing professions. Sex workers take greater numbers of clients only when they are on gigs away from home or if they need to save up for something especially expensive, such as plastic surgery or a trip abroad.

"I've done this work all the time, but no longer so that I earn a lot of money. On the contrary, whenever I can avoid doing this work, when I'm lazing around, then I don't do it. I just work enough to make sure there's enough money for a comfortable lifestyle and so on." (I, Lilja.)

Sex workers take two different views of the income they earn by selling sex services. Some do sex work as their main job and use their earnings for day-to-day expenses. They have no other source of income or at most claim a small amount of social assistance so that the authorities do not wonder at their lack of formal income.

"I'd have definitely been able to earn more, but I've enough to be able to cover basic living costs, and I've not been greatly troubled about money." (I, Elina.)

Others, meanwhile, make a clear difference between income acquired from selling sex and other earnings. This is possible particularly when the sex worker has other significant sources of income. The reason for separating sex work and other income is not wanting to your immediate circle or the authorities to know about the income you obtain from sex work. Such income from sex work is spent on various services and other immaterial commodities.

"At that time, I had two kinds of income. I had dole money, which I could use for anything I wanted. I used that for all my visible purchases. Then there was the money that I got from clients, Ok, I used it later because there started to be too much. I didn't use it for the first year-and-a-half for anything that is noticeable or on anything that lasts. So no books, no records, no clothes." (I, Gerda.)

"I try to use cash for living, clothing and all sorts of trivia. I pay all my bills from my bank account and for the sake of appearances I also bought food and petrol, etc. using my bankcard. And I put money from my salary in another savings account. Sometimes someone may of course wonder why I spent such a surprisingly small amount on food. But this way no one should pay any attention to it." (F, Eila.)

The separation of income from sex work and other work may also be to do with safeguarding one's own autonomy. It is often vitally important to the wellbeing of the sex worker that they feel able to quit the trade whenever they want. Some sex workers use income from the job for luxury goods, foreign travel and suchlike, as if it stands beyond everyday life and so is easier to give up if necessary. If the sex work or the standard of living it generates becomes established, the return to the daily life of a low paid woman may be tough.

In addition to those sex workers who fear that the source of their income will be revealed or who are safeguarding their freedom, there are also those for whom the motive for doing sex work is altogether different, and the rationale from the point of view of the money they gain is insignificant. There are some sex workers in my material for whom selling sex on an occasional basis is something of an escape from conventional everyday life.

"Although I lived on labour market subsidy, child allowance and maintenance payments, and then I got housing benefit, it was in the balance whether it was enough [to manage]. And there's this certain group that live in such a way that they're left with something over. But maybe it was some kind of need to do something else. A certain feeling of being pissed off with merely existing. I'd been with the kids for years, except for going to high school. It was a bit like there was a lack of action so I started experimenting. And then I noticed that it was really fun, so it took off from there." (I, Maija.)

There is a reasonably good level of knowledge at least among the more professional sex workers of legislation concerning the trade. For them, what makes the relationship between their sex work and official society palpable is taxation. Some pay tax because they want the security of being self-employed and the possibility of investing in fixed assets. The reasons for not paying tax may be the legal complexity of the activity of prostitution, as it is difficult to get sound tax advice. Some are worried by the publicity attached to tax data. Many consider selling sex to be such a temporary and occasional occupation that it does not require paying tax. **[70]**

The fear of remaining trapped in sex work also partly explains why the majority of sex workers do not pay tax. Each of them has experienced days when they simply could not stand their clients. Many also stressed that the precondition for being able to cope is unfettered freedom, and that it must be possible to stop doing the work as soon as they want to. The formalization of sex work through having your own business name and paying taxes is wholly different than selling sexual services more or less occasionally.

"I'm really fed up as I've been a long time without work but still the bills keep coming in. I should pay nearly 400 [€] VAT, 140 to the bookkeeper, 320 tax and just under 400 occupational insurance. In other words, I have to have ten half-hour tricks before I break even. It pisses me off – I'm already thinking of starting to moonlight again." (F, Heidi.)

"I set up a firm so that I'd be able to buy a good car and house. But with the obligatory expenses (pension insurance, VAT+other taxes, bookkeeper) it's like I'm 'forced' to do a certain amount of work a month." (F, Ansa.)

Sex workers also justify not paying tax on the grounds that because society does not guarantee them equal treatment, they need not respect social obligations. They consider it atrocious that a prostitute cannot pay tax directly on sex work but has to do it under some other guise.

"It's a double-edged thing, tax. You're taxed as you want but then paying tax under the right name and at the right rate is impossible. As long as I'm not able to pay tax honestly, then I won't pay it at all." (I, Taru.)

It is also perhaps pivotal, from the perspective of paying tax, that people decide on doing sex work more often for the free time it offers than for the money, and that they work as little as possible. The motive for doing sex work is not, therefore, a "passion for money", but rather a "passion for time", and a disdain for the controlled work that is performed in the formal labour market (compare Murphy & Venktesh 2006, 134). The cost-efficiency of sex work means that there is more time remaining for oneself than in other work. The absence of management furthermore offers the possibility to use this time as you want.

"I can choose myself when and what I do and whether I can be bothered to do it. Shall I go to central Europe for a month, or something like that? It's the freedom that goes with it that's really nice." (I, Kaarina.)

Sex workers are able to accept the risks attached to sex work because the other side of the coin is freedom from traditional wage labour. No matter where sex workers are in the commercial sex hierarchy, they emphasize the benefits of cost-effectiveness. One of the attractive features of sex work is that it minimizes the time spent at work and therefore offers opportunities to nurture your free time. (Pasko 2002, 61; Alvarez 1997, 203).

"Because of course I know that my place is truly at home with my children. This work is lovely because I have enough time and energy to be a mother who's really there for my kids, but my finances are also in good shape and when I'm in a shop I don't always have to work out if there's enough cash." (F, Ansa.)

"I think what's definitely best is that you're totally in control of deciding when you want to work." (I, Veera.)

In addition to their time outside working life, sex workers find that they have more freedom in their work than in any other job that would otherwise be available to them. Independent sex work is not like performing wage labour under typical management control. The entrepreneurial nature of sex work bolsters one's independence, but also one's autonomy:

"This is a bit like when I did these internet articles as a freelance – in the end it's quite the same. I've the freedom to come and go as I like. I'm not tied down to anything. I've also always had enough money that I can stop and start when I feel like it. I'm kind of not forced to work." (I, St.)

"Yeah, I've always felt that this is my vocation. I've inherited from my father the desire for self-employment and from both parents a desire for customer service. I'm not all that interested in doing regular jobs, but maybe at some point I'll have to. It suits me that with this I can decide when to work and when to take time off." (F, Sara.)

When they talk about the freedom the work permits, sex workers often mean the inner freedom of the job – on top of having free schedules – in which the work is to a certain degree comparable with wage labour and self-employment (pimping and independent sex selling), and so do not distinguish between sex work and other paid work. Sex workers may be relatively free to choose what kinds of services they offer and to whom:

"I can decide for myself what I do and when I do it. If it's one of those days when I don't want to work, then I put a message on the voice mail that I'm not available. And then I take the day off and go to town with a friend or something like that. I don't have to work, if I feel ill or something, for instance when I filed for divorce and hadn't yet informed my husband of the divorce and I was really frantic. I was really ill and I had clients booked. But I just went to the door and was looking really hysterical and stood there sobbing and said 'I can't work just now, could you come again later sometime?' Though I knew that he'd driven two and a half hundred kilometres simply to be my client. But no one can come and say that now you've got to work. If I was for instance working at the checkout counter or something, I couldn't say in the middle of my shift that 'I can't, I can't to do this, I'm stopping.' But I've complete freedom in terms of myself." (I, Ramona.)

In sex work it is therefore seemingly possible, due to the cost efficiency and autonomy of the job, to bypass the power relations associated with other wage labour. The primary motive for doing sex work would not appear to be the "easy money", as sex workers emphasize rather having time of their own and freedom of action: they are content with relatively modest earnings for maximizing life beyond wage labour.

Precarity?

Changes taking place in working life affect many sectors in different ways. Richard Florida (2002, 91-92) has highlighted the existence of the creative class, which is composed of white-collar workers who benefit from the changes. Their work is more self-motivated and their use of time is more on their own terms. The wage earner who enjoys a good position, perhaps working as a specialist of some kind, is able to compete for more pleasant and more challenging jobs.

At the same time, there are *precarious workers*, who work in low paid piece or part-time jobs, or else in the grey sector beyond the formal labour market. Precarity refers to the growth of indefinite forms of employment linked to the wage labour society, which are typically mutable, transitory and located on the fringes of "financially secure and legally protected forms of living." (Korhonen & Peltokoski & Saukkonen 2006, 379.) Precarious workers form an 'atypical workforce', which is permanently temporary and expected to accept work on any terms whatsoever. Recent upheavals in working life are evidenced by poorer working conditions, obstacles to life planning, an absence of earnings-related allowances and working agreements, and, above all, an inability to improve your own situation using the traditional means of industrial action. (The Helsinki EuroMayDay network & Megafoni 2006, 12.)

With the creative class and precarious work we have two perspectives on the same phenomenon. The creative class theory examines it from the viewpoint of preserving the triumphant predominant power relations. On the other hand, the discourse on precarity highlights kinds of work and life situations where personal resources and safety nets do not permit the best competitive tendering for employers.

Sex workers can be considered true symbols of precarity: they are often women and poor. They are often from abroad, in some cases migrants or even victims of human trafficking. They work alone and, because of the whore stigma, it is difficult for them to create better working conditions on a general level. In addition, commercial sex is located almost entirely in the informal sector, where the problems arising from the lack of labour legislation are most conspicuous (Decent work and the informal economy 2001, 5-7). Often, sex work is the only source of income for the worker apart from other insecure jobs or income support, as was the case with Minttu, who is studying nursing:

"I like nursing and now think that in the future I'll do both jobs on a temporary basis. Probably now, while I'm young, I'll be a whore more and then when I'm middle-aged a nurse" (F, Minttu.) **[71]**

Also, many of the problems raised by sex workers themselves are typical precarity-related issues: the fear of violence (Isabel), the absence of sickness benefit and other benefits (Puputyttö) and exclusion from the formal labour market due to a lack of work experience. For tax reasons you cannot invest in a large project, such as an apartment (Bionda). **[72]** Whore stigma and the secrecy that is attached it – which are the problems most commonly mentioned by sex workers – are such that sex work cannot compare directly with other precarious work.

The identification of the Finnish sex worker with precarious work is not clear-cut, however. In contrast to what is usually said about precarious workers, the sex worker does not, at least for now, consider her situation to be desperate or want an indefinite job contract. In this respect, sex workers fit in more with the ethos of the creative class: they take up sex work because it offers them the opportunity to decide on the nature of the job, and when and where they do it. Relative to other possible kinds of work, sex workers perceive themselves as coming out on top. Once again, it is a matter of having an alternative to what is offered by the labour market with respect to managing your life.

"I had to set up my own firm, because I couldn't stand working in some company arse-licking and dressed up in some clown suit." (I, Siveyden Sipuli.)

"After 4 months I found work as a cleaner. It was cleaning aeroplanes, really terrible and my back was always aching because I've had a crooked spine since I was small. My boyfriend then said if you want, there's no problem if you want to turn tricks. He didn't want to see me in such bad shape every day." (F, Iina.)

Although sex work has some of the features of precarious work, it would be fair to say – with certain reservations – that sex workers largely perceive their profession as being the opposite of, and an alternative to, precarious work. Autonomy is not only a matter of working time and working conditions, but also the content of the work. Alongside the strictly standardized and controlled work of the service sector, the autonomy of sex work is regarded as attractive:

"For one, I could carry it out myself. It's interesting and challenging work. You can decide for yourself what to do, at what time, for how much – there's no one bossing you around. You can determine the content of your working day yourself. The only real limit is your creativity, and your own limits, and of course the limits set by society – the law." (I, Camilla.)

"Actually the reason I got into this line of work was just the desire to do the sort of work that I enjoy. And then that I don't have to be ordered about on a minimum wage for eight hours a day. The freedom to work when I want and when I can be bothered. […] When I started there was no other work available where you could decide what you do and when you do it and with whom. It must be rare to be able to choose your work like that." (I, Elina.)

We see the same theme of freedom in how sex workers explain the choice between prostitution and other, perhaps less stigmatized, sex work. Under Finnish conditions, prostitution allows for at least a transitory autonomy, which the sex workers I interviewed feel cannot be had in erotic dancing, the porn industry or phone sex:

"In my view it's more worthwhile to be a whore, because you can decide the working time yourself and who you offer company to and who you show your body to. You get worse pay as a stripper and you have to dance for 8 hours a day just like in a normal job, and you can't stop if you get ti-

red. You can save yourself for much less as a whore! In other words, stripping is much more subordinating than being a whore. There's no flabby-stomached boss pointing at his watch and shouting at you... blah." (F, Iina.)

In the discourse on precarity, too, we find certain commentators who – like sex workers – highlight the positive potential of precarious work. Precarization has been regarded as an escape from the traditional discipline of factory work, which is now also infiltrating jobs in the service sector. A good example of this is the fast food restaurant industry and its standardization of practices. The status of the precarious worker is not wholly negative in this light. Precarity can mark an active and productive break with discipline, or an aspiration for an autonomous life (Korhonen et al. 2006, 380). Its ideals and expectations come very close to how the sex workers in my study justify the choices they make.

It is worth remembering, however, that the freedom, autonomy and cost effectiveness of sex work are all relative. Because of stigma, they only appear to be attractive alternatives in relation to the lowest rated segment of the wage labour market. Nearly all the sex workers I met who had the alternative of employment in the white-collar arena have either reduced their sex work or have stopped it altogether.

5. Sex

"I watched what was going on with great interest, whether there was something special and fascinating. Just stood there watching on the promenade side. I was even sort of envious when I saw what kinds of clients they had. They weren't ugly, old and fat. I was really envious because some tricks were these really tall and muscular men. It really made me think." (I, Tiuku.)

Neither sex workers nor clients comprise a clearly definable group. Many sellers enter the sector only fleetingly, while buying may be even more sporadic. Despite this, commercial sex appears to be a permanent sub-culture that involves particular roles, models and norms. In this chapter I look at the kind of significance that sex workers attach to commercial sex and what characteristics, according to their experience, separate paid sex from other sexual relationships. The commercial act may involve pleasure, but in contrast to private life the orgasm is not a criterion for good sex. The same is true of care giving and receiving in client relations.

For those who have worked in the sector for some period of time, the sexual dimension becomes more apparent in discussing the motives for their actions. In Finland, the power configuration of prostitution favours the seller and therefore in bringing about this arrangement, sex work can strengthen your self-confidence and increase your sexual independence. I also describe how some sex workers feel that in commercial sex they find a safe haven for their own sexual specificity, or that they have ended up in the sector because it offers better predictability than the intermittent sex of the majority culture. Finally, I consider the excitement that sex work gives as one of its attractions.

In Western sexual culture the romantic ideal prevails of the couple relationship in which sex means reciprocal intimate pleasure. This ideal is apparent especially clearly in the discourse on prostitution (Primoratz 2002, 460). **[73]** At a time when many previously stigmatized gender and sexual minorities are slowly normalizing, commercial sex is still approached primarily as a moral issue (Jeffreys 1990, 164-165; Agustín 2005, 682). Paid sex battles on far too many levels against the predominant norm: it happens in casual relations; the motive of one of the parties is cash; it accepts more readily than the dominant culture many forms of sex perceived as being unusual (Barry 1995, 59), and it is taken for granted that sex work is performed purely for money and is void of hedonistic interests (Jeffreys 1990, 122).

However, in light of the evidence generated by sex workers, the arrangement is more complicated. As in non-commercial relationships, commercial sex involves a variety of acts, players and experiences. Carole Vance (1989, 5) points out that the black and white division of good and pernicious sex is an illusion: non-commercial sex may involve abuse, while pleasure and satisfaction exist within the commercial sphere. In Vance's view, the focus purely on the either-or dimensions of sex limits (women's) possibilities to achieve sexual autonomy.

To climax or not to climax?

In our culture practically the only legitimate reason for having sex is pleasure, and yet it is assumed that sex workers approach sex indifferently or with outright disgust, at least when it comes to relations with clients. The myth of the universally destructive nature of sex work involves at least two presuppositions. The first is that sex should be pleasurable (for women), but that commercial sex is not. **[74]** As Carole Pateman (1988, 198) says, "Prostitution is the use of a woman's body by a man for his own satisfaction. There is no desire or satisfaction on the part of the prostitute". The second myth is that (for women) satisfying sex requires emotional attachment (Barry 1984, 266-269; Dworkin 1987).

My evidence questions both assumptions. One key attribute of sex stated by the interviewed sex workers is pleasure. In part, the emphasis on pleasure may come about because experiencing it is the norm of sex and the stigma directed at sex workers is justified by its departure from the norms of pleasure.

Undermining the presumption of the unpleasantness of paid sex means at the same time that we chip away at the basis of the stigma rooted in the myth of the suffering victim prostitute. (Kontula 2007, 501).

The references to pleasure are nevertheless so abundant and various that there is no reason to think of them as merely political imaginings. The ideal reciprocal intimate pleasure as the basis of civilian sex is certainly accepted among sex workers, but only as one possible form of good sex. The majority of the sex workers I interviewed said that they had orgasms when working. The main issue is not your own satisfaction, but from time to time it is there anyway (compare Pheterson 1996, 57).

"I had an orgasm nearly a hundred per cent of the time. This was the whole reason I kind of liked it. I think I always had the pleasure thing under control, and I feel I got what I set out to get." (I, Tiina.)

"Even though I've so often promised myself that in future I'll stick to my schedules and payments, well then at eight o'clock this young, really lovely looking and incredibly nice trick came to the door… He's just left and I took only half an hour's payment (the man stayed 3 and a half hours). I really enjoyed it and I can well imagine spending some time with a guy like that outside work. On the other hand, you never know if even he'd start hanging around and always haggle for pussy at the same discount price. Damn it, I wish I knew how to treat this work always as work [bangs her head against the wall]" (F, Heidi)

There is a dispute within the discourse on prostitution about whether or not sex workers enjoy their appointments with clients (Tiihonen 2006, 68). In light of my research material the question becomes irrelevant. It's rare to come across a sex worker in the trade who is seriously dependent on sex or then utterly disgusted by it. Some sex workers equate pleasure with practically every client appointment, while for others it may be an unforgettable exception. The most usual rating they give an appointment is "insignificant".

"I got this – basically quite business-like – email from a guy that said, like it was some great news, that he could make love for hours without coming once in between. I felt like replying that OK, that makes xxx€ per hour. Is it all right if I have a local anaesthetic for that time?" (F, Irene.)

"I like it:
• when I can just lie there for at least five minutes (but I must be told 'don't do anything now')
• when the man howls with pleasure (feeling of power)
• when the man caresses me elsewhere than between my legs (wonderfully relaxing)
• when I'm praised (but not too much)
• when the man talks dirty (but not obscenities)
• when the man comes in really deep and stays there
• when I'm pinned down and/or the man spreads my legs 'forcibly'
• when my hair is pulled possessively, but so that it doesn't mess up my do
• a quickie, but anyway lasting over 7 min." (F, Minttu)

Pleasure in sex work crops up in Mari-Elina Laukkanen's study of male prostitutes (Laukkanen 1998, 61). She divides the men she interviewed into two groups. Those in the first clearly sell sex for money, while the motivation of those in the second is sexual interest: "The gigolo is not, therefore, merely the object of consumption by paying customers, but also the consumer subject. Paying customers guarantee him a varied and inexhaustible romping ground of sexual fantasies." The same kinds of motives emerge in an interview-based study of homosexual men in Sweden who sell sex (Eriksson & Knutagård 2005, 35-36).

Earning money and seeking pleasure appear more tightly intertwined in the motivations given by the predominantly female sex workers in my research material, so we cannot speak of two distinct groups who are differently motivated. Motives to do with money and work are clearly more usual, while there is a varied degree of reference to sexual gratification. Laukkanen's description of hedonism is nevertheless clearly recognizable, particularly for those who have worked a little longer in the sector. **[75]** Even for Taru, who stresses that she does sex work purely for financial reasons, obtaining sexual satisfaction from paid relationships became important because of the letdowns she experienced in her private life:

"That's when I decided that I'd simply start to use them just for sexual satisfaction. If I've anyway done it once and got money for it, then I'd may as well enjoy it. And it worked in the sense that I really started to see men as simply walking flesh or whatever. That they have nothing to offer a woman but sex." (I, Taru)

Among sex workers, of course, we find a variety of ways of approaching sex. According to the material I collected, having an orgasm is only one part of a broader terrain of sexual pleasure, meaning the kinds of feelings, responses and actions that the sex worker perceives as sexual and which induce a sense of sexual enjoyment on a physical and psychological level. For instance, Ramona finds that she obtains significant and expressly sexual pleasure from her work, even though touching the seller's erogenous zones is excluded from the service she offers:

"Then I also like being a certain sort of sex symbol. I enjoy it when men come here and lust for me. When I see that they like me then I sort of tighten the noose, like "ha-ha, look at this cute ass – but you're never getting a piece of it.' Kind of teasing. And many men come back time after time, and they always ask 'so, are you finally gonna let me have some of that pussy?' And I say 'well, not yet'. They like the idea that I'm unattainable. When I'm really strict with these rules of mine they also get a kick out of it." (I, Ramona.)

The importance of sexual enjoyment in client appointments also varies with the situation. Lilja says that when she used amphetamines she was "manically hooked on sex", but since she kicked the habit being with clients has become "just a job". At first, Tiuku took clients only when she wanted sex: "It was quite clear that clients came for me and for desire. In other words that I satisfied my desire with clients." Later, as her degree of professionalism grew, this entailed a distancing of her own sexual needs. Kaarina, Jaana and Minttu report that their own enjoyment depends a lot on the client:

"I did a hotel call today for a 24-year-old wrestler. The boy was like a magazine photo, light hair, big blue eyes, soft voice and his body….ahh! At first I just held it and bit it, though usually I don't do anything like that, but he was just good enough to eat! And he was wondering 'because my girlfriend's never been this wet.' Ohh, those nicely rounded buttocks and broad and strong chest and those biceps… he even had me in a wrestling hold while he was…" (F, Minttu.)

"To me a testosterone-pumped young man with a great body means that he's got no same-aged life partner haunting his thoughts and instead we can enjoy a moment of plain sex together! I enjoy a young man for his unadulterated sexuality and he a woman whom he doesn't have to seduce – and what's left is pure sex." (F, Jaana.)

It is impossible to draw a generally applicable line between commercial and private relations concerning the sex worker's experience of sexual pleasure. Some think that sexual pleasure belongs only in the realm of private relations, while others place it squarely in the sphere of commercial sex. Maija considers herself responsible for her clients' enjoyment, but in her civilian life lets her men serve her, and is "totally selfish". Sirkka, on the other hand, thinks that sex is better in a paid context, as in her experience men appreciate sex more when they have to pay for it. In contrast to what Teela Sanders (2002, 561) proposes, the distinction does not take place logically by shifting pleasure and feelings merely to the arena of private relations.

There is certainly a clear boundary between commercial and private sex, but what creates it is appreciation rather than sexual satisfaction. Sex workers, too, select their clients, but the criteria for choosing them are different than in couple relationships, or even for non-commercial and short-lived sexual relationships. The ideal sexual partners in ordinary life are at once selfish and attentive, do not restrict but appreciate their partners, and are understanding and gentle. Successful private sex means reciprocal enjoyment, and if the man neither understands or knows how to do it, he is free to leave. Though the commercial sexual act may involve sexual enjoyment, for the sex worker it is not the criterion of success. In commercial relations, for the seller to reach climax is not necessarily a positive thing, and by itself does not make for a successful sex act:

"They say that prostitution is kind of easy money. Well, I had this client who wouldn't come. It took two and a half hours of sucking to get him to come. So, was that reasonable? I had three orgasms and got three hundred euros, but anyway. You try sucking a dick for two and a half hours and then say that it's easy money. Luckily it was so small that my jaw didn't ache." (I, Minna.)

On the whole, sex workers do not select their clients on the basis of their own sexual predilection. From the perspective of the professional, the ideal client is one who looks after his personal hygiene, is steady-going and easy, does not haggle and does not become infatuated. Erotic charisma is naturally a plus, but it is not essential. When the border sometimes blurs, due either to the behaviour of the client or sex worker, the situation can get awkward:

"I'm completely and hopelessly besotted with my trick. Me, who reckoned that mixing work with the rest of my life would be the last thing I'd do. And now I'm struggling with myself whether to tell this trick (who himself said that he's 'completely crazy' about me, but probably only as a paying client) or not (that's what the guy is paying for after all: sex and company AND NOTHING ELSE)." (F, Irene.)

For the sex worker, this is the crucial difference between commercial and private sex. The sexual acts may appear to be similar and we call both of them sex, but for the sex worker sex as work and sex as pleasure are two different things. The difference explains why it is that the lack of pleasure in contractual sex does not necessarily arouse feelings of being exploited, any more than shaking hands without having an orgasm would (compare Zatz 1997, 281).

Care giving

The sex workers I interviewed say that some clients come to them for reasons other than for sexual pleasure. It is up to the sex worker how she deals with these often-unarticulated expectations by clients. Sex can be a means for treating the client's physical troubles, creating an atmosphere of confidentiality to discuss things, improving his self-confidence or simply for providing the intimacy of being close to another human being (compare Momocco 1998, 180). In this sense the meaning of sex is one of care giving, and the sex worker who in this case talks about it considers the value of her work to be in the role of a helper or healer. Sex becomes a method:

"I feel that I'm mainly – not really a social worker or psychologist, but something of the sort. I was there not purely helping them to come, but I also maybe help them understand themselves a little or see things differently. But that's the way I have always been. There's no difference in how I was then and how I am now." (I, Gerda.)

From the care-giving perspective, sex work comes close to those service professions aimed at helping people and overcoming their problems. The experienced sex worker is attentive to the risks associated with receiving unknown clients, and hardly anyone likes all their clients. Not everyone accepts commercial sex as a form of care giving, and some even consider it ethically suspect. And yet the interview material yields instances that are strikingly beautiful, even motherly in character. Sirkka is worried that clients feel unnecessary guilt because of coming to her. Both Ramona and Gerda feel that their work had helped them understand men better:

"Even though men claim to be real rogues in the way they talk and act and think, they're like little boys. Especially in situations when they feel vulnerable, when they're full of desire and they don't know how to express what they like." (I, Gerda.)

Sex workers like to share anecdotes about their clients and laugh at their bizarre requests, but in general their tone is benign. There are evidently plenty of clients who are mean and unpleasant, but they are considered the exception. Some, particularly older, sex workers construe their work as a form of care giving:

"I would say that I like my work. I like guys, I like sex. Of course, I very rarely have an orgasm with a client, but I still enjoy myself. When I see a man having an orgasm, there's this sort of energy or something that comes from him. It's a tangible feeling. It feels good." (I, Sirkka.)

"I was just thinking about this sex work and on what basis I could be sure how in my view my sex work brings about more love than ruin. It's just this intuitive feeling that I get from my customers. I feel good and I get positive feedback. The appointment, even though it's for pay, feels honest anyway in those circumstances. And in those circumstances, within the ground rules that there are, within those limits, it's genuine." (I, Leenu.)

When the sex worker fulfils a client's wishes with emotional services that are not included in the actual contractual relationship, we can speak, in the context of exchange economy, of a gift economy. Patricia Lewis (2005, 574) writes about nurses who work in a unit for premature infants, and who would perform small emotional services that were not part of their job description. For instance, when a child dies they help preserve memories of the newborn infant, or at a difficult moment wear a smile that is extra to their work obligations. It has been remarked that to look at emotional work merely in terms of the logic of the market overlooks everything else besides the work that people carry out at the bidding of the economy (Bolton 2000, 580). Sex workers may perform comparable emotional work too. This is not perceived as a sales item in the way that sex is, but it may in reality be a part of the deal, depending on the situation:

"Yeah, I've noticed that for many what's more important than the fuck is the feeling of being close afterwards and chatting. With some [clients] it's like 'let's get that done with so that we can lie together and be close'." (F, Ansa.)

"The majority of clients want to be close, to lie right on top during sex or I lie on top of them. It's actually nicer than some violent pumping. A lot of [clients] want to be stroked and touched and just talk about how their day went. I think it's great and it shows how much men yearn for affection." (F, Iina.)

In combining sex with various facets of care giving, attention and healing, my evidence comes close to the traditional portrayal of the caring woman. Fredrick Engels and Simone de Beauvoir, both radical theoreticians, considered the roles of the sexual prostitute and the caring wife as being intertwined or mirroring one another. Engels (1973, 217-218) parallels the relations of exploitation between the working class and the bourgeoisie with those between men and women. **[76]** The protection of private property required women to be monogamous and to focus on producing heirs, but because men were not required to be faithful to marriage, the solution to the contradiction was prostitution. In de Beauvoir's

view, both evince the gendered nature of sex and power:

"For both the sexual act is a service; the one is hired for life by one man; the other has several clients who pay her by the piece. The one is protected by one male against all others; the other is defended by all against the exclusive tyranny of each."
(de Beauvoir 1974, 619.)

One of the most famous prostitutes in literature is the saintly Sonia in Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, who, in addition to looking after her drunken father, sick mother-in-law and young brothers and sisters, takes to caring for the guilt-ridden Raskolnikov (Dostoyevsky 1987, 18-21, 511-515). Sonia's role blurs to near invisibility the distinction between of the gentle Madonna who provides care and sex in monogamous couple relationships and the sinful whore.

But the actual experience of sex workers is more varied than the traditional portrayal of women suggests. While the care-giving element crops up in my research material, the sex workers who perform it appear far more independent and able to take care of themselves than the self-sacrificing Sonia. The women get sucked into the old pattern of care giving, and this prevents it from being restricted to the contractual relationship. Sometimes the tables are reversed and the sex worker becomes the beneficiary of affection and care:

"I was pretty depressed today, I don't remember why, because there were constant calls from unknown [numbers], but then I had three punters and now I've perked up. I guess it's really twisted when this is the only thing that cheers me up, having people over for a little while and they stroke my back and touch me. It puts me in a good mood." (F, Iina.)

"There was this geekish, chubby man here today, and after fucking he caressed me for about half an hour. I just lay there and let him stroke me, as he'd paid for the whole hour." (F, Maikki.)

The traditional thinking is that in prostitution relations clients come to satisfy their own sexual desires, while sellers satisfy their own need for money (Davis 1937, 748). But it is obvious that for the sex worker paid sex fulfils more than a purely economic role. This point opens up the possibility to examine commercial sex as one of the sub-categories of sexual culture. In this the terms of exchange determine the ground rules and divide players into market roles, but both the seller and the buyer have choices other than from purely economic angles.

The route to sexual independence

The approach that prostitution is a separate sexual culture presents us with a new set of questions on the issue. In Finland, it is acceptable, at least among unmarried people, to have short-term sexual relations, and indeed for women it is easy. If financial motives were not involved, would anyone be prepared to endure the whore stigma simply out of an interest in sex? Are there certain desirable aspects of commercial sex that we do not find in the non-commercial sexual culture?

Yes and no. As is probably the case with any other form of wage labour, it is very rare for any of the sex workers I have met to say that they entered the trade *only* for reasons other than financial ones. For the sellers, sex work is often insignificant in sexual terms, and sometimes selling sex may even require that they have to restrain their own desires. I have, however, found instances where sex work functioned as a route to a more satisfying sex life. There is an often-repeated story in the banter of female sex workers, in particular, of how paid sex, which in itself is insignificant, can nevertheless lead to noticeable improvements in your personal life. How so?

I set out to open up the mechanisms in the power relations between clients and sellers. In the view of sex workers the situation favours them: out of 25 interviewees, 13 said they were in a dominant position with respect to their clients, and 11 estimated that there was an even distribution of power among the parties in that the sex worker would determine the limits within which the client would make choices. **[77]** This assessment may relate to the relatively good position of sex workers operating in Finland, but in the international literature too we find descriptions of the sellers' experience of power:

"It [sex work] really challenged the idea that orgasms are something a man 'gives' you. That's part of the traditional belief that women aren't supposed to be in control of sex. Instead, you're supposed to be passive and accept whatever happens. But, as a prostitute, you really do determine what goes on, you guide the entire experience." (Maryann Santa Cruzista, interviewed by Chapkis 1997, 85.)

At the time I compiled the material for this study, the Finnish sex market was heavily on the demand side, or a "sellers' market", where clients had to compete for appointments. **[78]** Together with a fair employment situation and social welfare, the sellers' market strengthened the sex workers' negotiating position in that they could select their clients and, in most cases, decide to stop doing sex work if this was their wish.

According to sex workers' evaluations, the inner logic of client relations also puts them in a strong position. The buyer has to pay for the appointment and he wants to do so. For many men a successful act requires that the sex worker be aroused (or at least act aroused). Meanwhile, the seller is satisfied when she gets paid, and when payment is made in advance, her remuneration is not dependent on the client's pleasure. Though the seller might be in the trade against her will for financial reasons and so relies on the income she gets from it, her earnings are not tied to any particular client. **[79]**

"And if I don't have a good time with a client, I notice it after the second time, and I say directly to the customer that this isn't working. I say completely straightforwardly that 'you'll have to look for a service somewhere else, but you can't get it from me'. I've had to say this a few dozen times because it's true. I'm entitled to choose my customers in exactly the same way that the client has the right to choose me." (I, Tiina.)

"I've taken some guys by the scruff of the neck and seat of their pants and chucked them out, because they've behaved inappropriately. At the beginning of an appointment I always explain my own ground rules, and if they don't follow them, then I'll say 'no' once and the second time chuck them out." (I. Maija.)

Sex workers' experiences of power are interesting not simply because they counter constructions of victim myths, but because we find in the same material frequent mention of oppression in their private relationships. Over time Tiuku felt pressurized by her first sexual experience. Lilja's first love dumped her as soon as she had lost her virginity. The relationship Ramona had when she was a teenager involved one-sided oral sex as often as three times a day. Ramona, Krisse, Sirkka, Gerda, Nelli and Kaarina all have sexually frustrating marriages behind them in which they felt they were merely the giver:

"Maybe I hoped all the time that I'd get affection somewhere. And then I've never had any or ever expressed any personal wishes. I hoped that the man would naturally understand." (I, Kaarina.)

"[At secondary school] I went out with some boy, and he didn't even believe that I was a virgin, and he pressured me. I always feel, I don't know, I felt at the time that it was rape. Not that I was actually threatened in any way, but it was really oppressive and so on. I didn't want to be with him. [Afterwards I felt] filthy, dirty, revolting, repulsive and terrible." (I, Milla.)

Taru and Gerda are true veterans of miserable relationships. Taru lost her virginity in a gang rape. She had two long relationships, with an unfaithful boyfriend and in a violent marriage. Gerda's experiences of oppressive, sordid and "compulsory" sex comprise the years she lived with her boyfriend and then her husband:

"I said [to my husband], 'every time I'm at the shop' – I was at the shop maybe only a couple of times a week, as it was hard to go there with the kids – yes, 'every time I'm at the shop and if I

happen to remember how repulsive I feel, how sordid I feel, when I'm forced to perform conjugal duties with you, I buy a bar of soap each time. And if I don't have the money to buy soap I sort of commit it to memory and the next time I buy two.' There were mountains of soap in our house. Really." (I, Gerda.)

"When I was married there were longer intervals between sex. He was violent. And when we had sex, I felt he forced me to do it, that I didn't want to do it." (I, Nelli.)

We might easily associate the brutal personal histories of some sex workers with the ubiquitous belief that people who take up sex work are already traumatized. In this sense, the reason for doing sex work would be the lack of self-esteem and an inability to look after oneself because of abuse. (Martinell 1995, 7.) Maybe this is so in some instances. But the majority of the descriptions of experiences of oppression in my research material are not the sorts that are usually thought of as being deeply traumatic. Rather, the point concerns power relations, which more often than not do not entail violence, but where the interviewees feel that they were abused or at least that they gave more than they received. These experiences really do seem to be significant to the interviewees in terms of the power relations involved in sex work:

"I used to be a little scared, partly afraid, and treated men with a sort of respectful distance. Nowadays, it's completely the other way round. Men are the needy party and I can treat each of them as suits me. If someone doesn't suit me, then the man'll get nothing. They are in the subordinate position from my point of view. I'm the one who decides and lays down the rules." (I, Kaarina.)

Based on such experiences, it would not seem that people take up sex work in order to relive past traumas. According to my research evidence, it is their role as sellers of sex that stands precisely *counter* to their unsatisfying sexual history. After having experienced oppression it may be liberating to find that there is no danger in demanding pleasure for yourself, and that many men are even prepared to pay extra for it. Client feedback and the willingness of punters to pay up affirm that the active and desirous woman can be attractive:

"And I always used to feel like I'm just there to satisfy men's needs. I didn't even feel that I was important. But now I've started to analyse this thing because of this work and Jani and anyway. So I know how to demand more." (I, Ramona.)

"I take stupid [clients] too, as long as they're good looking and good in bed! Like this country biker boy + builder! Jesus, he was telling me in this strong Häme dialect that he watches rally racing and rides a motorbike… he's certainly never read a book, but ooh, it was lovely to fuck with him! (F, Minttu.)

Four interviewees mentioned that in addition to having an unsatisfying sexual history their doubts about their appearance or attractiveness also factored in their decision to take up sex work. Tiina suffered anorexia when she was young, and "when I was doing my first gig I wondered whether I looked attractive enough." Lilja's insecurity compounded her rapid weight gain and sexual inexperience. Ramona thought of herself as fat and unappealing because of her ex-husband's comments:

"I've suffered from apathy because it's difficult to feel passionate when someone else thinks that you're this tub of lard. You don't feel a lot like having sex." (I, Ramona.)

When it comes to selling sex, though, we hardly find any mention in the research material about pressure to do with one's appearance. Sex workers explain that they had a better physical self-image from regularly having positive feedback from clients. You do not have to be stereotypically attractive in order to sell sex; instead, many clients appear to seek the company of sellers inaccessible to them in a non-commercial role on account of their age/looks/general demeanour. In this case the demeanour of the sex worker may in itself be the realization of a more sustained fantasy. Kaarina, for instance, who is over 60 years old, says that she has often received compliments from young clients. Krisse found that she was able to get over a draining divorce with the help of sex work:

"But then with prostitution and this erotic massage I gradually regained my self-esteem. Being constantly admired was flattering. […] What's more, I started to look at myself differently in the mirror – like, hang on, I thought I was flat chested and now I saw that I do actually have breasts. My image in the mirror looked different." (I, Krisse.)

"I've started to pay more attention to my appearance, though I still don't do that much with it, especially in my free time. But sure, before I just kept my eyes looking beautiful. Now my whole facing is starting to look pretty. And I've really gorgeous thick hair. My physical self-image has improved." (I, Maija.)

Sex workers try out their powers of attraction on their clients and generally receive flattering feedback. Eva Pendleton (1997, 80), for example, interprets the hetero-normativeness of sex work as the utilization of feminine performance. In the material on sex workers we find instances where they prepare for appointments with clients as if for a stage production in which the sex worker is the star and the client's job is to act as the audience.

"I want to be more of an object in the [client] relationship, the kind that's admired, not the opposite. […] Especially these men in their forties –you don't even have to be all that hot, as long as you're just younger and fresh, then right away they're besides themselves. Of course, it affects you when they put you on a kind of pedestal, like 'am I really so lovely?'" (I, Susa.)

It would seem, in Finnish contexts at least, that a woman has the opportunity to take an active and dominant role as a sex seller, one that is traditionally associated with masculine sexuality. This experience is carried over to private relations. Ramona now considers herself to be attractive, though her new boyfriend, who "worships her body", has also boosted her self-esteem. Sex work has encouraged the interviewees to see themselves in a more positive light in other respects too. Gerda says that she likes it, because she feels that she "is needed". Tiuku wonders at how the positive responses she gets on the street counters the discrimination that she faces because of her transidentity.

But what may be a good situation from the angle of the seller can collapse when the general supply and demand relationship or the prevailing arrangement within the client relationship is upset. Gerda's case indicates how selling sex against your will can be an extremely traumatic experience. She quit street prostitution altogether out of concern for her mental health:

"I thought of getting a special kind of knife with a handle like the top of a dick. Then, when the customer is in the car with his seatbelt on, I'd say to him 'Yeah keep the seatbelt on. It's fun. You don't have to get up. I can fit here between your stomach and the steering wheel, just tilt the seat back a little like this'. And when the customer is there reclining he can't see much, he's just waiting for the show to start. Which is when I undress a little and stab him in the gut with the knife and ride on its dick, rocking back and forth – I mean it wouldn't really work, because the guy would still have his hands. And make a racket. But I think it's a beautiful idea. It'd just suit those floppy-dicked old wrecks who dare to come unwashed and demand that I suck them off without a condom. It was so revolting and I don't think that they even realize how humiliating it is to ask that. 'Stick my unwashed, flaccid dick in your mouth.' – 'Stick it in your own!' I caught myself feeling more and more aggressive." (I, Gerda.)

Apart from the general context of commercial sex, the power relations of the client and sex worker are connected to individual resources. It requires an adult and self-respecting sex worker to take control of a client situation. Minna was 16 when she began selling sex. She found that because of her youth she consented to clients' requests when they clearly posed a threat to her wellbeing:

"There was one time – well, it wasn't anything really bad, but it was anyway traumatic. After we'd had sex, a client wanted to take me to a car park and call his friends to come there. I had to get out of the car and turn around so that they could see me properly. Like a cattle market." (I, Minna.)

Sex workers' experiences of their trade as a source of sexual self-determinacy is puzzling. To some extent the literature deals with prostitution as a possible route to financial and social independence (Bassermann 1967, 36; Swantz 1979, 111-114; Marcus 1990, 60, 93). But sexual independence, at least on the part of the seller, is not commonly associated with commercial sex.

When such a link has been made, it has concerned sexual cultures far less libertarian than Finland's. For instance, in some surveys sex workers from developing countries have explained that they have much greater sexual negotiating room with clients than with their partners or boyfriends (Pattanaik 2003, 312). Also, Australian immigrant women say that the expression of sexuality associated with prostitution can in itself give women from cultures that suffocate sexuality a feeling of freedom and strength. Above all, for those women who consciously choose to work in the sector and do so independently, sex work has given them power and self-confidence. (Meaker 2003, 99.) **[80]**

In Finland, sex that is subordinate to the husband was formerly part of the institution of marriage (Ronkainen 1990, 79-82, 93), but relatively far off from the present ideal of sex. And yet for us too the experience of control in client relations can still pave the way to a stronger sexual position in couple relationships. For some women, sex work has facilitated a relationship in which ultimate power resides with the seller. Such a situation may offer a stark contrast to these women's non-commercial sexual history, where equality has been the ideal but subordination to a man has been the reality.

Tolerance

The sex workers who feature in my research material continually compare their work to the non-commercial sexual culture. **[81]** Some of them think that their choosing sex work has come from a need to find a permissive setting for their own sexuality. To them, the dominant culture establishes stringent sexual norms and punishes deviant ones by labelling them. A higher tolerance of differentness occupies the commercial sex terrain. Despite all the stereotypes, sex work tolerates and even encourages forms of sex that are stigmatized. Sallie Tisdale compares the norms conveyed by porn and its adversary, feminism:

"That branch of feminism tells me my very thoughts are bad. Pornography tells me the opposite: that *none* of my thoughts are bad, that anything goes. Both are extremes, of course, but the difference is profound. The message of pornography, by its very existence, is that our sexual selves are real." (Tisdale 2002, 376.)

Sex work reflects your earlier experiences. Kaarina says that at home and among those close to her the subject of sex was deemed unseemly and was prohibited. Some sex workers come from a religious background or in other respects had an upbringing that was sexually restricted, which presumably gave them an even stricter impression of the norms of the dominant culture than they actually are. In the world of commercial sex it is permitted and desirable to be 'naughty', while in the cultural mainstream simply showing a greater interest in sex than usual is enough to brand a person, especially a woman. In her day job Camilla talks a lot about sex with various women. She is perplexed at how strongly norms concerning chastity still appear to exert an influence:

"I constantly notice that in a way it is distressing for women when they can't or are not supposed to don't have permission to be sexual beings. And I think it's more and more like that. Then again, I feel glad I'm the only one who makes it happen, but that doesn't make me a deviant. And I always get the feeling that it's forbidden for ordinary women, because they are not allowed to be sexual or desirous and demanding. And they can't express it either." (I, Camilla.)

It can be hard to assimilate an active sexuality or one that deviates from accepted norms into the monogamous nuclear family. Sex workers say that at least some of their clients come to them to satisfy the kinds of fantasies that they cannot realize in their ordinary lives. And vice versa: the sex worker can enrich her private life with her clients. For Heidi this was the main reason to return to the trade following a long break:

"I noticed that I was constantly fantasizing about strange men fucking me. My own man is too attentive and gentle. I began to yearn for the feeling that I'm a whore whose only job is to keep men satisfied." (F, Heidi.)

"CAMILLA: I have to say that I enjoy doing this work immensely. If I didn't do it – my husband and brother are in the habit of saying 'shouldn't you go to work for a bit to get it out of your system', because otherwise I'm too bossy in my free time. [laughs]
ANNA: Does the job reflect in your ordinary life?
CAMILLA: Not in the sense that if I had the kind of man at home who'd serve and admire me, or wanted me to treat him badly and have real domination sessions, I couldn't handle it.
ANNA: So the sexual relationship is constructed differently?
CAMILLA: Yes. I think it wouldn't work at all if it was like he agreed to be my little slave. I wouldn't be able to separate it [from work]. I'd carry on working. [laughs] To me a couple must be equal. Certainly, you can do what you want according to how you feel, but I think that's the best way for me." (I, Camilla.)

Such interviews contain numerous experiences of sexual specificity. More often than not it is a matter of unusually active sexuality, not a penchant for some form of sex deemed to be extraordinary. By active sexuality I do not mean a greater need for sex, rather a general approach to the world: these sex workers feel that they are strange because sex plays a bigger role in their lives than is considered appropriate. Siveyden Sipuli says she has always felt that she was more interested in sex than those around her, and that she was therefore different.

" 'Free' sexuality as an approach is anyway a way to be and to live. In a way it's in the same class as promiscuity, but demands a little more organization." (F, Irene.)

"The good side is that you become familiar with different features of sexuality in yourself and other people. I've always been really interested in sex. Sex is my favourite subject, talking with people about different sexual experiences, what they like and so on. […] I'm really fascinated, and always when there's a new person, I'm always interested in what his dick's like and which way his sperm will shoot out. Or whether he'll make a lot of noise when I whip him or if he'll just be quiet." (I, Ramona.)

Sex work can therefore be a chosen lifestyle based on personal idiosyncrasies which are brought to fruition. Regardless of stigma, the perception of yourself as an oddity in mainstream society can make you feel accepted in the sphere of commercial sex. It is because of this that particularly conspicuous sexual minorities are over-represented in the commercial sex sector. Sex work for the transperson can be a positive setting within which to try out and learn various forms of sexuality:

"At the time I started doing sex work I still hadn't learnt to have an orgasm as a woman. […] What of course felt nice and exciting right at the beginning was that it gave me the opportunity to just physically try out how this and that felt like. I don't really know exactly when it was that I got it – and wow. I think that I'd maybe worked several months. Anyway, I'd worked a fair amount of time – I'm not sure whether it was months of or as long as a year. Anyway, I'd been doing sex work for a while. And then I started to be ready. Sure, I'm glad that I went into sex work. I get the feeling that if I'd just continued as I had been, I'd have replied to those 'pen pal' ads and looked for a boyfriend, and I'd have gone for sex therapy for quite a while, and learnt you enjoy sex within the framework of monogamous dating." (I, Leenu.)

"It was at the beginning of the 1990s. There was unemployment and that's when this prostitution came, or started to flood in over the border when the Soviet Union collapsed. That's when street prostitution became noticeable. And all my friends went whoring on the street and there were a lot of other transvestites. It was supposed to be the done thing to go whoring there." (I, Tiuku.)

In her study of sex worker's clients Maria Lohikivi argues that they too are able to satisfy the kinds of sexual urges in the commercial sex arena that would lead to them being labelled in mainstream society. There is a feeling that cross-dressing is powerfully stigmatized. The contractual relationship enables both the sex seller and the client to experiment with finding or strengthening their own gender identity. (Lohikivi 2005.) Commercial sex involves significantly stronger reciprocal confidentiality – and often anonymity – than other short-term sexual relations do.

Based on the preceding discussion, it appears that the sexually active woman does not get into sex work principally to get plenty of sex, which she can get anyway, but because the prostitution culture tolerates a woman's desire better than the dominant culture and so is less stigmatizing. Within the commercial sex arena, sex workers are likely to find peers with similar experiences. Further, some make use of the variance of sex work for the development of their own sexuality. While in the sex workers' experience non-commercial casual relationships have meant relatively conventional acts, in sex work it has been possible to get hold of an almost unlimited number of different partners.

"Then, because I'm pretty omnivorous in these things, I got bored being with one person incredibly easily. And it's pointless to go in search of various subtle differences in these matters in some bar or among a group of friends. Meanwhile, with clients you get subtle differences across the board. I was hugely satisfied in that respect. I found the work fun and rewarding otherwise, but later I've also found that it's the variety that I miss." (I, Gerda.)

"If, for example, a client comes for a session in which I'm to be submissive, then I set certain rules, certain things that I say to the client. I won't, like, start grovelling to anyone, like when he says something I crawl on the floor and lick his toes and so on, because I'd get nothing out of it. So I to say 'Ok, during a submission session, I like to do such and such things, and I can't easily be made submissive.' I tell the client. Because it's a big part of my identity, if I didn't make these things clear, then I'd feel that I'd simply taken cash from the client purely out of greed." (I, Ramona.)

Feona Attwood (2007, 451-452) has written about how amateur and alternative porn can give people the space to develop and display their sexual identities. In the material I collected, too, there were some sex workers who take their trade extremely seriously as a project of personal development. For them, the main motives for sex work were to discover new things and to use their own creativity. The terms of exchange make it possible for the seller to develop her own sexuality as a "profession", full-time. The interviewees rarely see sexuality as being immutable; rather they emphasize its variability and the importance of personal insight and discovery. Through sex work people seek knowledge and experience "that you can't really study except in practice." (I, Lily.)

"After I started sex work I began to be generally interested in sexuality. I realized that there are incredibly many sides to it. Eroticism acquired a greater significance and deeper importance. So in fact it didn't have a negative effect. […] What sort of things did I learn, is that what you're asking? I've learnt that the way sexualities are expressed have great significance. That all the gentleness and all the touching are pretty important in sex, in sexual experiences." (I, Kaarina.)

"I was already a really sexual person before I started doing this work. My sexual relationships of course grew numerically, but for instance their quality in no way got worse. It was the opposite, I somehow knew how to enjoy it and get deeper into sex. In a way I got into my own sexuality completely on a practical level, more inquiringly, and I was intrigued by it. […] I can enjoy it [standard sex], but I can't progress any more. I can't get 'better', so to say. This sadomasochism offers me so many more possibilities. There're a hell of a lot of challenges that you really can't even deal with them." (I, Tiina.)

When the interviewees explain their reasons for deciding to return to sex work after having once stopped doing it, they highlight the special character of commercial sex. In contrast to when you started out in the trade, you understood what you were getting into:

"I said 'I'm now at an age when there's no way that this is appropriate. I'm now going to start to live a bourgeois, proper life.' Well, I lived like that for a little while. But then I started to feel terribly lonely and depressed." (I, Kaarina.)

"But after a year's break I started to work in an SM studio, through a friend. Stripping and then domination sessions – verbal subordination and whipping. Clips and bonds, pissing on [clients], which it now involves. Things like 'and now you're going to lick up that semen you've spattered on the floor!' I find it real fun. I like it." (I, Gerda.)

There are, of course, limits to what commercial sex tolerates. Many Finnish sex workers feel that immigrants are desperate competitors or potentially dangerous clients. Attitudes to clients' requests are usually neutral, but within the networks of sex workers there are endless horror stories circulating about 'perverted' clients.

It seems obvious that people who are interested in food will seek a job in the food industry, while those interested in cars will do the same with cars, and that those interested in sex will end up in the sex sector. In this sense it would be only natural that many sex workers feel that sex is for them an exceptionally important part of life. And yet as a researcher I had a problem with this. I did not like the fact that some sex workers said that they were particularly suited to sex work. An interest in cars and sex differ from each other at least in one respect: no one is put away in a mental hospital, prison or reform school, or is fired from their jobs or expelled from the country because of their interest in cars. People who repair cars are not refused visas or college admission, their spouses are not accused of serious crimes, nor are their children taken into care. You can be both a devoted car mechanic and a fully legitimate member of society to boot.

But a sex worker cannot. Throughout history the justification for suppressing and controlling prostitution has been that it concerns a special group of people who deviate sexually from other women (Hubbard 1998). The sex workers' experience of the special nature of their sexuality indirectly supports the justification for special sanctions.

On the other hand, the theme features so prominently in research material that it would be out of the question to ignore the matter. Only some of the sex workers I met said that their motive for doing the work was due to the peculiar quality of their sexuality, but these people were all the more obviously trying to describe something that was meaningful and true to their lives. My research material supports the idea that the sub-culture of commercial sex allows an uncommon amount of room for distinctive sexualities, whether they involve sexual identities that depart from the majority of the population, spe-

cial inclinations or simply a stronger than usual interest in sex.

Prostitution in Finland comprises an arena that Gayle Rubin (1981, 53) refers to as tolerating various sexualities better than the cultural mainstream and therefore attracts people to it who see themselves as deviants, or are labelled as such by others. The anonymity entailed in the ground rules of commercial sex gives people a greater opportunity than with non-commercial sex to develop their own sexualities, and to find the partners and resources needed to do so.

Explicit rules

In the section above I describe the circumstances in which sex work is experienced as freedom compared to the sexual norms of the cultural mainstream. In the following section, however, I assert the apparent opposite: that the lure of sex work increases its contractual procedure and through that the existence of its clear-cut boundaries. The sex workers I met actively search for new forms of sexual experience and/or sexual pleasure, but they do not like the unpredictability associated with short-term sexual relationships. **[82]**

Sex work is usually perceived as risk-taking behaviour. It seems, though, that the definite contractual procedure of commercial sex gives some sex workers a sense of security. Sex workers stress that paid sex involves explicit ground rules and the importance of drawing the line. In their view it departs in this respect from the rest of the dating culture, which is based on the ideals of romance and spontaneity.

Dating culture of course informs many of the general practices of sex work (for example the practice of forming relations in a bar or night club environment in the evening) and the relatively strict parameters that limit the permissible forms of the act, though the main conditions of the appointment are often determined nonverbally. This approach incurs an endless amount of unmet needs and desires, misunderstandings, uncertainty and confusion that are left unarticulated. (Compare Veijola 2004, 116.)

The rules of commercial sex diminish the feeling of ambiguity that is associated in my research material with other forms of one-off sex. **[83]** The commercial sex sphere is not necessarily the only explicit regulation of sexual relations, but in Finnish culture it is the most prominent. Sex workers feel that rules create certainty and control intimate contact.

"So I think it's, can I say morally more legitimate than if I just went to a bar to fuck someone. I don't know if people do this because they feel bad and lonely or whatever the reason, but it's irresponsible I reckon. Playing with other people's feelings. That's how I've experienced it. Now that I'm working in the sex sector it's somehow more open, and each side knows what's going on." (I, Ramona.)

"You know what the score is, what you've committed yourself to and what you've promised. And the other person who comes knows what to expect. There's been enough said earlier about what the rules are. You work within them and then it's perfectly natural and spontaneous. You don't have to wonder 'does he expect something now?', 'should I now behave this way or that way?' or 'what should I do now?'. 'How can I make a good impression?' It's somehow such a clear relationship from the outset. I think it's good." (I, Kaarina.)

Although sex work is located in the margins of illegality and legality from the standpoint of society, commercial sex players admit to and recognize the trade's common ground rules. These include at least (Kontula 2005, 27. Compare Varsa 1986, 47; Benjamin & Masters 1964, 31):

1) The terms of business (the services for sale, their duration and price) agreed in advance.
2) Payment in advance in cash, unless otherwise agreed.
3) Use of condoms always, including for oral sex.
4) Both sides bound to confidentiality.

Individual players may, of course, break these basic rules and there is situationally much variation in the terms agreed. If, however, for some reason the rules remain wholly undetermined, the way they are interpreted diverges or if the parties think that they inadequately fit the situation, then the contractual terms collapse:

"Yeah, I once had [an all night gig] where my gentleman bounced up and down on me all night, and now and then I slept a bit because we didn't agree anything about how many times he could fuck... We ate and drank and he was a nice guy, but he definitely wanted to fuck 4 times during the night, and it took hours... After that I took a week off because the gentleman had exhausted me." (F, Iina.)

Sex work inherently implies a clear lack of any emotional obligation. This is considered one indication of its exploitative nature, and yet the sex workers in my research material consider it above all to be a legitimate excuse to assuage a client's romantic expectations:

"I think it's good that in a way there's none of the pressure that you get with dating, that you have to really like [one another]." (I, Per.)

"In one respect, when there's money involved then neither of you are left unclear about what's going on. Because when there's no money, then you start thinking what if there was something more to this. Or if for some reason it means more to them. Then it'll start to be like he's hanging around, or I feel that he's hanging around me. Calling me, like, and saying let's start dating and blah blah blah, stuff like that. Well, all that gets skipped. Or at least it's easy to draw back and say straight at that point that 'hey [...] I'm doing this only for the money, period.' And even though it may not necessarily be the truth, it's always an easy excuse." (I. St.)

Commercial sex therefore differs from other sexual relations at least in that the rules are agreed in advance and so events are easier to predict. For some sex workers, this appears to be an important advantage, so much so that it at any rate partly compensates for the risks involved in sex work. They attach great importance to the fact that new and sporadic acts are as far as possible under control.

Many of the sex workers I selected for this study appear to share an appreciation of order and regularity in other spheres of life too. As children, they achieved good grades and enjoyed learning. They keep their homes tidy, take out pension insurance before the age of thirty and will be inclined to return home to check that they have not left the coffee machine on. In the series of messages concerning this subject that we exchanged, three of them described themselves as "control freaks".

We perhaps see the same need to be in control in relation to mixing drugs and alcohol with sex. My research material includes dedicated disco-goers, but also people who shun the idea of picking up sexual partners from night clubs. Kaarina and Sirkka, for example, dislike bars and Gerda disapproves of mixing alcohol and sex. Clients, too, have pointed out that one motive for contacting prostitutes is that they do not enjoy being in bars (Varsa 1986, 67).

"Of course there are many reasons I went on the streets, but if I think simply and only of my own sexuality, then I found it really positive that I, being sober, could choose who I wanted to go with and what the ground rules are. And this person would not hassle me and I wouldn't have to tell him anything about myself except what I wanted. So on a certain level I felt that the situation was better than in some bar." (I, Gerda.)

There are also those sex workers who say explicitly that they avoid alcohol, because they do not like to lose control:

"I've got nothing against alcohol, but I've always said that I really need to be in control of myself, and that being drunk doesn't agree with me. I always think about all the things I could have had

time for with the time I used to spend drinking. [laughs]" (I, Camilla.)

"I usually drink fairly little, probably because I don't really know how to relax when there're a lot of people I don't know around." (F, Maikki.)

Control and being in charge also feature in my research material as a more broadly defining feature of the day-to-day lives of sex workers. In their life stories appreciably many (five of the interviewees, and many of those listed), mentioned an eating disorder, which has been interpreted as a condition caused by an exaggerated need to control (Puuronen 2001). While such eating disorders in all cases were a thing of the past, the interviewees said that they still recognize the traits in themselves that led to their becoming ill.

All in all, it appears that for those who avoid the dominant dating culture to "walk alone", sex work can offer a more emotionally and socially secure context for sexual experimentation. In Noah D. Zatz's (1997, 291) view, apart from income, the choice of profession is often influenced by the chance that sex work offers to have control over sexual intercourse. The ground rules in the paid act multiply the sex worker's – and presumably also the client's – leverage for controlling and systematizing the situation.

The whoring urge

In addition to the aspects of the terms of exchange described above, there remains one feature that is difficult to define. I will use Maija's name for it, the *whoring urge*. With this term I try to convey the particular restlessness and yearning for excitement that makes some people choose sex work, and above all to return to it time and again. One woman, who works as a home help, and who left sex work, describes how she always misses the "whoring time" of spring, when she would travel "around Finland by car, whoring".

"For three weeks I've concentrated on and satisfied only my boyfriend, and now I should soon start taking clients. My lower abdomen's already itching (in my privates), it's like let's get to work." (F, Irene.)

The difference between these passages and the preceding chapters is that some see commercial sex not just as a refuge for their own sexuality, but that sex-as-commercial-transaction is itself their particular sexual propensity. We find mention of a "tug of the blood" in the direction of sex work (Ansa) and an indefinable inner need to do sex work and nothing else:

"I knew when I was already 14 that I wanted to be a stripper." (I, Milla.)

"When I met my present lover, I explained that nothing else interests me, that yeah I've got to set up a studio there in Helsinki. So once again we're at this point where we shouldn't be. He said that 'Ok if that's what makes you happy and it's your work, then do it." (I, Tiina.)

I call this particularly erotic dimension of sex work adventurism. Sex workers who yearn for this are the sort who describe themselves as "restless souls" (I, Susa) or "hungry for life" (I, Minna). Sex work is by its nature a mobile profession, and the same goes for many of the people who end up doing it: ten of the sex workers I interviewed have moved around a great deal in their lives. Many have lived abroad, or during their childhoods there were frequent changes of scenery, and some travel a lot. Susa and Milla define themselves as "backpackers". Sex work fits perfectly into this ethos of restlessness and adventure-seeking.

"The attraction is not purely sexual. At least I feel that it's something about the freedom, lifestyle and excitement too. I've now been out of the picture for a year. For the first six months I didn't miss it very much, but it started in the spring and the summer was difficult. I really feel like burning rubber all over Finland. Wild and free and totally desired." (I, Maija.)

This compares sex work with a kind of hobo romanticism, and Maija's sex work has certainly involved plenty of travel. Sex work is also mobile in other respects than purely geographical terms: within it you frequently change jobs and leave and return to the trade. It does not require start-up capital, and so there is a low threshold to entering and re-entering the field. (To maintain their freedom sex workers also try to keep their options open about whether to quit.) Though some sex workers collect a regular clientele for themselves, many value changeability among their clients:

"I'm starting to get bored because the same regular calls me every week. It'd be nice if there were always new and not the same types, because I can't be bothered with them. I've now had a Swedish regular who comes to me every week, and I can't work out why he's not getting bored." (F, Iina.)

The flexibility of sex work is not always a positive thing. Adventurism also involves a strong element of risk. This can mean insecurity (exposure to violence, disease and/or poverty) and a lack of life management. I have met sex workers who have been robbed, raped and assaulted, without recourse to help or protection. Still, the better the situation of the sex worker the more they emphasize the exciting and challenging side of the work.

"I have to admit that this work makes life exciting, and if I didn't get it this way, then I'd get it somewhere else. Yeah, I like whoring, though I won't do it for the rest of my life..." (F, Irene.)

The majority of the sex workers I have met did not have a clear idea of what the job involved when they first started doing it. Starting sex work was in itself a brave move and one often located at a point in life where they were looking for something new. Because of this, many felt a particular curiosity during their early days on the job, and sex workers' biographies contain an abundance of adventurism, such as themes to do with freedom, discovery and controversy (compare Bernstein 2007, 477). **[84]**

"But then it began to be dull, living in the country. The animals and cowsheds were fun, but everything else there – relatives and the rural smallness of it all. It started to be oppressive." (I, Tiina.)

" I went onto the street out of curiosity. I went because I thought it'd be fun to see whether it would work. Would I be able to do it?" (I, Gerda.)

It is also interesting how sex workers give the whoring urge as the reason for returning to the trade, despite their firm decision to quit. The underlying motive may be the need for money, but in addition a yearning for some other reality that the non-commercial sexual culture is unable to offer:

"I've a really bad conscience about this because I cheated on my partner, and because I was dying to carry on fucking with anyone who pays. Especially because I enjoy sex such a lot." (F, Heidi.)

"Maybe in some way it goes in cycles with the seasons. I get this kind of whoring urge [...] I've wondered if it's some sort of disorder or something. Maybe it's just that in a way it's forbidden and a kind of adventure." (I, Milla.)

"I've sometimes wondered why I do this at all, but as it is I'm hooked. I like it. The fact is that I love doing the things I do. [...] But my partner doesn't like it. His speciality isn't bondage. And I really like the domination of bondage. I don't know if I could do it at home. On the other hand, I think that it's so deep in me that I'd do it anyway, even if I could do it at home." (I, Krisse.)

The opportunity for numerous intimate contacts in itself creates a feeling of adventure. The decision to take up sex work may be preceded by dissatisfaction with your own sexual inexperience and a desire to learn as many new things as possible in the domain of eroticism. Lilja started sex work when she was well over 20, because she had comparatively little sexual experience. Kaarina, on the other hand, had had a long but erotically dreary marriage. The novelty soon fades, of course, but many of the interviewed 'veterans' feel that client relations still affect and develop their sexual awareness. The field trip they embark on with their regular clients may even last for decades. It is as if sex work becomes its own occult:

"Well, I wanted knowledge. I thought that I should meet some people who could teach me. I wanted more eroticism in my life." (I, Kaarina.)

"I would surely have gained many experiences down other avenues, but it's given me the chance in a way to look closely at people, really get to know them and their world and issues on a personal level." (I, Tiina.)

The occult nature of sex work reinforces the marginality related to the whore stigma, the chance to traverse the boundaries of the legal and illegal, public and secret. Sallie Tisdale (2002, 374) defines pornography using precisely these characteristics: though it concerns media production, porn can be anything that cannot be talked about. The same definition is at work, at least in part, in my research material, as the adventurism of sex work emanates from everything that is passed over in silence in the cultural mainstream.

"I'm not going to tell my neighbours or my daughter or anyone about what I do. Because to me it's a secret matter. Like being a secret agent." (I, Sirkka.)

Sex workers' organizations define their activity in the contexts of both sex and work (Bell 1994, 110). As I see it, the importance of sex work to the sex worker cannot be understood as long as we stick with the assumption that the sexual experience can only be one of mutual pleasure and attentiveness (Oerton & Phoenix 2001, 403-404). Sex workers endorse this definition, but at the same time they attach many other significances to sex. Depending on the situation, sex can be play, pleasure, self-expression, control, work, performance, a gift, and so on. (Seidman 1992, 131.)

6. Control

"We whores are the footsoldiers of the women's movement."
(Sex worker interviewed by Pheterson 1996, 63.)

When I asked sex workers during my interviews with them about their plans for the future, their replies were mainly commonplace hopes that life would go smoothly and with no insurmountable setbacks. But, in choosing sex work, they had seemingly acted at odds with these aims. For some, perhaps, sex work made managing their lives easier in terms of money, time, and sexual autonomy, but it also involved serious risks concerning social labelling and personal safety. While the people in my research would, outside their roles as sex workers, be full members of society (which not all are), as sex workers they are excluded from the standard means of control or have to adapt them.

The opportunity to affect your own working conditions largely determines the extent to which we can speak of choice in connection with commercial sex. In this chapter I criticize the black and white division of voluntary and enforced prostitution and try to show that, as with other kinds of work, the issue is one of a complex interrelation of alternatives, contexts and resources.

Sex workers pursue their trade in such a way as to derive the advantages of selling sex while avoiding its risks. I look at the means of control that sex workers in Finland have in order to do this. I describe three aspects of control: the practical social control of the client situation; the formation of a group identity through shared discussion channels; and the carnivalism characterizing the activist culture of sex workers. I conclude by arguing that for some people selling sex is inherently a political choice.

The majority of the risks associated with the work of sex workers originate from the whore stigma. In some cases this has resulted, inadvertently, in the emancipation of sex workers: in many countries, forcing prostitutes into certain areas, or red zones, has resulted in sex workers forming their own communities. The labelling of sex workers as un-feminine sexual deviants has in some places helped build alliances with groups of lesbian activists (Zatz 1997, 303).

The terms of control are therefore essentially bound up with the hazardous social stigmas we looked at in Chapter 4. Ivan Wolffers (2000, 2) distinguishes between three levels of specific emancipation concerning sex workers:

1. *Personal emancipation*, when sex workers become more aware of their own abilities and the options available to them. The sexual health campaigns run in many developing countries certainly succeed in disseminating information to sex workers on safe sex, but as long as the choice on using condoms rests with the client or pimp, the seller does not in reality have a chance of benefiting from such safe sex information. The best results are those from projects that instead of being based on the view of the authorities concern sex workers' own judgements of what would be to their advantage.

2. *Communal emancipation* refers to strengthening the mutual interaction between sex workers. In addition to support by the surrounding community to the individual, it can provide mass strength to bolster their demands. In Italy, sex workers go en masse to the police station to file a complaint whenever the police harass any one of them. Peer communities are also needed to tackle negative whore myths and construct counter-identities.

3. *Social emancipation*, where the aim is to support the broader struggle of sex workers for their rights. Sex workers in many countries have set up organizations to demand safer working conditions, an end to formal and informal discrimination and full civil rights. Such goals are not easy to achieve: prostitutes often belong to marginalized groups even before they start sex work, and so from the outset have slim chances of influencing society.

In many countries, sex worker communities are common, but in Finland clients are generally procured over the internet and so many sex workers do not know others in the trade. This underscores the importance of strategies of resistance by individuals. Still, in Finland too there are peer communities of sex workers who collectively seek to influence the marginalizing cultural mainstream.

Force and free choice

The public debate on prostitution repeatedly returns to the issue of voluntariness. The political views that hold sway in the European Union are rooted in the problematics of both coercion and voluntariness. The *abolitionists* believe that all prostitution is coerced and therefore constitutes violence against women. Women are in such a weak position under patriarchy that their explicit consent to selling sex cannot be considered competent. **[85]** The *regulationists*, on the other hand, draw a clear distinction between voluntary and forced prostitution and demand that selling sex voluntarily be regulated as gainful employment. (Roth 2007, 427-428. **[86]**)

Both viewpoints are too narrow to describe a terrain of complexities that determines on the one hand the sex worker's personal goals and alternatives, and on the other the expectations, limitations and obligations that come from society. The abolitionists have been criticized for sidelining sex workers' voices, and the regulationists for their inability to deal with systemic coercion. The debate easily leads to a fruitless argument about the relative numbers of voluntary and coerced sex workers, when it would be more important to think about how to reduce the stigma directed at all sex workers (Pheterson 1996, 18).

The division into voluntary and forced sex work is significant as long as sex work is examined from the perspective of sexuality. The difference between sex and rape is precisely to do with the consent of the participants (Rubin 1982, 222). In practice, of course, the definition of rape is not so clear-cut, but when selling sex is understood as work the separation is in many ways even more problematic (Doezema 1997), because the division inadequately recognizes forms of structural coercion, such as poverty.

The point in sex work is more often of people who think that selling sex is the best choice out of a limited span of options. Within the given circumstances, some women take a rational decision to sell sex. This is not "free choice" outright, but in the global labour market this sort of "free choice" is a rare privilege. (Hoffman 1997, 62.) Sex workers' organizations do not claim that sex work is purely a free choice, rather that it is free in the same sense as other choices made in the framework of a capitalist, patriarchal and racist system are free (Bell 1994, 111).

Furthermore, the separation of voluntary and forced sex work also divides sex workers into two groups, of which only one is entitled to receive assistance. A consensus has been reached in international agreements on measures to counter forced prostitution, but there is not a single agreement that intervenes in the abuse and human rights violations of sex workers who voluntarily work in the trade. (Doezema 1998, 41.) If a sex worker states that she works voluntarily, she will not enjoy full civil rights (e.g. legal protection), she can be the target of sanctions (e.g. refused entry into the country), she has no recourse to compensation if she is swindled (e.g. by a pimp), and she has no realistic chance of demanding better working conditions.

The debate on free choice presupposes that voluntariness and force can be separated on the basis of external identifying features. In reality, force and voluntariness may be interwoven in the personal history of the same individual. The sex worker may come to the country with every intention of voluntarily selling sex: she is not forced to do so until she finds herself unable to quit due to circumstances to do with a pimp or financial problems. In my research material the key element in defining force externally is the experienced feeling of force. The experience of forced sex is traumatic, regardless of whether the act is paid for.

> *"There were two times that I was forced to go whoring because of my cash situation, and the anxiety it caused was frightening. My experiences have otherwise ranged form slightly unpleasant (bad smells, floppy dick, etc.) to nice, lovely, heavenly, and on two occasions 'come into my life, man' types. I go whoring when I feel like it and when time permits. If I was forced, I wouldn't last a week." (F, Jaana.)*

As we saw in Chapter 5, the core reason for selling sex is the freedom the job permits. There is therefore reason to assume that at least some of those who go in for sex work are more allergic than average to all forms of coercion. Sex workers stress that one of the reasons for being able to cope with the work psychologically is the feeling that they can stop it whenever they want.

> *"Excitement and having your own secrets are nice enough in small quantities, as long as they don't take up your whole life. I don't want to be dependent on working as a prostitute, but be free to leave it any time I like, if I should happen to feel like it." (F, Virve.)*

> *"I work just when I feel like it. I don't have any money problems, because I'm studying and get a student loan. I don't pay a shitload of rent, I bike to school and get free food there, I wear clothes from the flea market, stuff like that. I work just as much as I feel like." (I, Milla.)*

Sex workers use a number of ways to try to retain the feeling of voluntariness. The most usual reasons for feeling forced are financial straits and the loss of your own limits, and so sex workers often have control strategies for coping with these issues. Some put aside enough money so that they can cover necessary expenses even when they do not feel like selling sex. Others use the money they earn from sex work only for luxuries and finance their day-to-day living by other means:

> *"When there's no other income and I have to pay for rent and living by selling sex, I get really pissed off with this work. But when I get those paid for by my other incomes (as now), then selling sex in many respects feels more rewarding and because of that also voluntary. I can use the earnings from it just as I like, and I don't have to stress if there's a day when I don't feel like having anyone." (F, Aura.)*

The boundary of force and voluntariness that we find in the research material on sex workers has a wholly different importance than in the abolitionist or regulationist ideology. With the exception of extreme situations, the elements of force and voluntariness of sex work may be present interchangeably. The voluntary nature of the work is the unconditional requirement for sex workers' wellbeing, and they continually make choices in order to protect it. But the experience of force is also familiar to many of them. Their solution to the hazard of forced sex is not, however, to quit sex work but to develop various systems of risk management.

Client relations

Faced with weak communities, anonymous trading and intense stigma in Finland, the majority of sex workers meet only clients in their role as sellers. Client contacts are therefore concrete and an interactional situation that connects all sex workers. It is also a contractual relationship in which there is a continual discussion on the price and what you get in exchange. The client and the seller are bound together by secrecy, but this mutual solidarity is constantly under negotiation.

> *"They use any excuse to try to get it cheaper. Then there are the 'delayers' who see how much extra time they can fuck, if they've paid by the hour. But they get going once you hint that their time's run out and your boyfriend's coming round soon. I can't be bothered to have a bad conscience about it, even if some slack dick can't manage to come when I'm charging by the hour. But sometimes I'm flexible, if the client is otherwise nice." (F, Maikki.)*

Sex workers differ in at least one respect from other entrepreneurs in the service sector. Although selling sex is not a criminal offence, nearly all activities to do with it are, and so in practice sex workers are always breaking the law in some way and so have no recourse to legal protection. (Compare West & Austrin 2005, 139.) And while they emphasize that the majority of their clients behave in a business-like manner, in the end everything depends on the seller's ability to keep a tight rein on the situation. This situation is a transaction in which the seller has no recourse to legislation that provides security comparable to that guaranteed for all other contractual relations.

The sex worker's skills of self-protection are put to the test during negotiations with clients. Occasionally, however, clients can manage to talk their way into getting lower prices or special services at a basic rate. The sex workers represented in my research material repeatedly emphasize being vigilant and refusing to yield: once you become amenable, clients will endlessly leech your services and emotional care giving, preferably without paying. There are few ready ground rules in the commercial sex trade and there are always those who break them too. Only a rooky sex worker will trust an unknown client, which is why payment is always taken in advance. Some callers agree on a time to come but then do not show up. The experienced sex worker is always on her guard with a unknown client and, for instance, makes sure that he does not duck out of using a condom:

"Sure, it's annoying when clients imagine that they can get away with anything. One of them suddenly and sneakily took his condom off behind my back. I asked him what he thought he was doing. He said he wanted to jerk himself off, but I had a bad feeling about it." (F, Maikki.)

"I've a habit of often checking during the fuck that the condom is definitely on properly. The tricks probably don't even notice, because at the same time I rub their balls, etc." (F, Heidi.)

You can learn to avoid unpleasant or even dangerous situations, but to do so requires setting limits and making choices.

"Everything always happens using a condom, absolutely. If we change position, I check that the condom's on, that the client doesn't take it off. I never take anyone who's been drinking. No drinking at all, because OK, if they drink a bottle of beer, they're quite sober, but things still mightn't work. And if they don't, then it would sort of be my fault. I don't want to hear that I'm no good due to the fact that someone's had a bottle of beer. So, no drinking at all and always make sure the condom's on properly." (I, Taru.)

The sex worker minimizes the risks of tricky clients in the first place by being selective. Unlike flight attendants or telephone operators (compare Korvajärvi 1999, 354), the sex worker is able, in conditions in Finland, to refuse to take disagreeable and rowdy clients. Sometimes, though, she miscalculates or in the absence of more agreeable clients will stoop to taking a "stinker", "haggler" or "suit". If a disagreeable client manages to negotiate his way in, it is unlikely he will be turned away. Rather, the sex worker will try to deal with the appointment as swiftly and controllably as possible, and afterwards put the client on her blacklist. In such unprofitable situations the sex worker may influence matters to make them more emotionally tolerable by small acts of retaliation that the client does not necessarily even notice.

"For those who're against using condoms I put an extra strong one on, out of revenge." (F, Minttu.)

"This idiot who'd [twice] not turned up called and was again late, so I told him that the price was dirt cheap and gave him an address on the wrong street. I hope he went skulking around there, phone in hand." (F, Eila.)

Perhaps the most obvious risk to do with sex work is being defenceless in the face of violence. The sex worker has to meet in a private setting with unknown clients who are often physically stronger than her. (O'Connel Davidson 1998, 63.) Because she has no recourse to help from the police, her ability to spot dangers spontaneously and to avoid them figures strongly in the definition of her professional skills. Generally, one's own instincts, general etiquette and men's vulnerability in such situations offer protection enough. But the possibility of violence is always present, and you can try to lessen it by verifying the client's identity or by using security staff (Høigård & Finstad 1992, 61; Bernstein 2007, 480).

"Yes, I receive unknown clients now and then, if there're no other callers. I won't agree on a meeting, though, unless they call back from their own number." (F, Aura.)

"I always make a mental note, if I can, of the car's number plate and so on." (I, Susa.)

"I find that my dog gives awesome protection. I don't know if I'd even dare do this work at home without it." (I, Nelli.)

"I'm never happy about going [on a hotel job] alone. I always want back-up." (I, Yritteliäs.)

Sex workers choose their method of work and working environment so as to minimize the risk of having difficult clients. Like Gerda, some sex workers feel that street prostitution is safer, while others find that working indoors is less of a risk. The Public Order Act of 2003, which prohibits buying and selling sex in a public place, posed a security threat to those selling sex on the streets and a reduction of their autonomy, because they could no longer work in an environment of their choice (Kauppinen 2004).

Violence is where the client neither recognizes nor honours the tacit ground rules of commercial sex. Intuition is key in avoiding dangerous or desperate clients. As US ex-sex worker David Henrey Sterry (2005) put it, if something feels wrong, then it probably is. Experience is largely a matter of listening to your intuition.

"ANNA: So you find that working on the street is safer than choosing clients over the phone? GERDA: Yes. Of course. Because when I'm talking to someone on the phone, it might be a completely different person to the one who comes to my door. He might be drunk, which means that he isn't the same person. He may be shy about the meeting and have had to have a drink, or then he's otherwise just put on a sober voice over the phone. I can't know who's going to be coming. The way I see the world – whether it's to do with a client or not – is to check a person's body language. I look at a person's bearing, the way they walk, the way they sit, how their face moves when they talk, what they say and the way they say it. I've got this sort of computer in my head – I don't know how it calculates them, but based on what I see I'm able to tell all sorts of things about a person." (I, Gerda.)

Sex workers' encounters with violence increase significantly when – because, say, of a change in the law – they quickly have to change their working procedure or environment. In the new setting, certain environment-specific sensors no longer work, giving rise to miscalculations. For the same reasons, the sex worker may choose to exclude a particular social class or ethnic group from their client base. Dealing with a foreign culture creates a situation in which you may not be able to trust your own judgement:

"I don't accept Arabs, Africans, Latinos or Gypsies as clients. I don't take to them at all – in fact the opposite, they're scary, because in their culture a woman you pay for is the lowest of them all, hardly a person at all. It may be that I've missed out on some nice clients, but I don't want to take any more risks than you inevitably get with this profession." (F, Minttu.)

"I expressly don't take foreigners, because in their countries paid sex with a prostitute may be different, or they may experience it in a different way than in Finland. Maybe there aren't so many limits, for instance Finns don't allow [clients] to lick their pussies. Anyway, you always get misunderstandings with these foreigners, because you can't understand what they're saying." (F, Iina.)

Many of the sex workers in my research material have to make choices about clients over the phone and to distinguish likely problem clients simply on the basis of their voices. Statistically, working indoors is safer, though conversely if there is an emergency there is no help at hand. This underscores the importance of intuition, or whore's instinct, as we saw in Chapter 5. Nearly a third of the sex workers interviewed by Murphy and Venkatesh (2006, 140) said that their only safety strategy was to listen to their instincts. The writers interpret this as a groundless sense of security, but in light of my own research material it would seem that experienced sex workers get into dangerous situations less often than beginners. **[87]** Lilja, who has done sex work for years, thinks that this is precisely where the benefit of experience shows:

"I know how to group clients really well. I immediately know from their telephone voice whether this is a potential client or not. I immediately know where the conversation's going, so I can tell from the tone of voice if this is the kind of person who I want or not." (I, Lilja.)

"We're really not a social service that has to treat everyone equally! The selection starts already on the phone: if the person's way of talking doesn't feel right, then you don't fix an appointment." (F, Jaana.)

Sex workers can also get rid of unwelcome clients using general warning systems. As with communities of sex workers in many other countries, the chatroom they use in Finland has a blacklist of undesirable clients. If it is a matter of a really dangerous case, sex workers try to inform others about it as widely as possible. Some years back, a client robbed Amalia. She texted the man's number and a warning to all her colleagues listed in the ads section of the *Helsingin Sanomat* newspaper. Marjatta informed her colleagues about an abusive client via the Pro support point to all Russian sex workers' networks.

Birth of a sex worker

The opening shot of the modern European whore movement took place with the occupation of a church in Lyons in 1975. A group of sex workers were fed up with the lack of will on the part of the police to solve the murders of prostitutes and to protect them from violence. With the blessing of the local police chief, fines had been imposed for selling sex and prison sentences had become common, which, together with the violence on the streets, further aggravated the women's situation. For two months, a group of French sex workers occupied the city's moral centre, the Saint-Nizier church. The move prompted the first general discussion on the problems of sex workers and received broad public support. (Pheterson 1989, 5.)

A few years earlier San Francisco saw the establishment of COYOTE (Call Off Your Tired Ethics) to further prostitute's rights, and this served as the model for the rise of sister organizations all over the United States (Pheterson 1989, 4-5). From the outset COYOTE also accepted non-sex workers. The founder of the organization, Margo St. James (1989, xix), later said that the successful establishment of an activist group required a least four allies, "a political hooker, a feminist, a friendly journalist and a lawyer."

By the end of the 1980s, the West led the gradual formation of an international whores' movement – in so far as 'network' is a valid description of scattered, stigmatized communities of sex workers who focussed largely on local campaigns. The first convention that brought together activists extensively from different countries was *The First World Whores' Congress*, which was held in Amsterdam (International Committee for Prostitute's Rights 1985). Sex workers also published their own magazine and news bulletin and formed links to those rare researchers who already then were interested in sex workers' perspectives.

Since then, sex workers in Asia and South America have set up networks locally, nationally and internationally (Kempadoo 1998, 20-22). By the 2000s the largest material resources of the movements continued to be in the West, but the initiative is now also spreading in the third world. For example, the network of the Calcutta Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee, in India, now has 65,000 members (Debnath 2006, 29). The organization has attracted support in all the poorest towns, meaning that the movement, which was originally started by well-to-do sex workers, can no longer be considered purely as an elite organization.

The use of the internet, particularly in the West, has had a strong influence on the development of the whores' movement, enabling the creation of anonymous chat sites. This has been especially important for sex workers who work independently indoors, and who do not meet others through their work. (Bernstein 2007, 479.) Information and support for regional activist work can be transmitted rapidly via international (ICRSE, APNSW) and national online communities.

Anonymous online networking and concrete activity locally are typical of the whores' movement, which means that it has no recognized leaders and only rarely has it had widely accepted spokespeople. Nevertheless, we can trace the existence of an activist culture constructed around the internet and also more traditional channels of communication. Local action groups regularly swap experiences; tried and tested arguments and methods of operating spread rapidly. Ever since the 1970s the movement has produced numerous collections of writings by sex workers (Ryan 1997, Chapter 2, 8) and similar viewpoints have also been voiced in written interventions published by sex workers' organizations from different countries.

There are myriad examples from around the world of how, using mutual interaction and common projects, sex workers have attained self-confidence, improved their working conditions, gradually disseminated information about the trade and built up mutual solidarity (e.g. Thiboutot 2006, 24-25). A similar process is documented in Finland with the closed online forum, through which women who sell sex individually created an anonymous community of sex workers.

In its early years, the site was used mainly for dealing with problems, sharing joys and exchanging professional tips. Although accessing the channel required some links with commercial sex networks, the site seemed to bring together people from different worlds through their mutual pastime. Individual acquaintances were formed, but a notable part of the early discussions resembled a handy hints column:

"I can't think of any other [non-latex condoms] than Avanti that you can get in Finland, and you don't have to look for any others, because they're really good. In the US there was a really good Trojan brand, but you can't get them here, so it's worth buying them if you happen to end up in the US. I'm not allergic to latex, but Avantis are just wonderfully easy to put on when you've got a bigger-equipped man." (F, Virve.)

"I've bought some VIVAG capsules from the pharmacy, for health reasons, which you put in your vagina in the evening. They kill bacteria (at any rate, I've not had anything bad)." (F, Erika.)

However, the chatroom gradually developed into a permanent chat community. In particular, sex workers in and around Helsinki who are members of the forum met one another, and occasionally did team work for clients who want two sex workers at once. **[88]** Working on the margins of society built up solidarity, while also helping sex workers to understand the trade's special features (compare Aalto & Minkkinen 2008, 39). When interviewed, those sex workers who are on the chatroom list or belong to some other peer community mentioned this as an important source of strength helping them to cope:

"I've thought of telling one of my friends who I trust, but I'm still thinking about it. It would be fantastic to unload my feelings now and then to someone other than on the SO [Sihteeriopisto forum]. But you girls out there are worth your weight in gold, even just chatting over the net!" (F, Irene.)

"I haven't been able to tell anyone about this, because of the children. Sometimes it would be great just to talk to someone face-to-face. Luckily there's the forum." (F, Rosa.)

"I think that in a way there's this feeling of inclusiveness, which is the touchstone, when it comes to the crunch […]. A really close friend of mine died the summer before last. Someone who I could go and stay with and who took care of me, who was my workmate." (I, Milla.)

Autumn 2005 was a turning point of sorts. This was when Parliament debated the criminalization of buying sex and the issue was widely discussed in public. Websites devoted to commercial sex followed this debate closely and carried links to articles, news, opinions and discussions dealing with the subject. Because the users of the websites were from all over Finland, the links included regional and local news in addition to the national media.

There was also a lively discussion on sex workers' websites concerning the government bill and the attitudes of decision-makers to sex workers. In general, they thought that the public myths about prostitution had very little to do with the daily realities of selling sex and that the media debate suffered from the absence of input by professionals in the trade. In the following section I will examine in some detail Sara's analysis of how mainstream society approaches prostitution. According to my reading of it, it is the key opening argument in a chain of messages that later ends up seriously considering – for the first time ever in Finnish sex worker discourse – ways to change the situation.

"This 'persecution' of prostitutes is already starting to acquire all the signs of psychological violence. The way it goes is that the perpetrator constantly occupies more and more space in the victim's life. In other words, he deprives the victim simply by pressing and pressing until there's no room left to move. In the process, human dignity and respect are negated, though they were hardly there to begin with. First, buying sex in public places is prohibited, and then ads are removed from the newspapers, and now they want to ban buying altogether. It's also been made clear that you can't operate anywhere, apart from you own flat, and you might be kicked out of there too, if there are enough complaints made in the neighbourhood. There was an international conference of prostitutes in Canada, where people compared the situation in different countries." (F, Sara.)

This is interesting in two respects. First, at the end there is the first-ever chatroom reference to the international human rights movement of sex workers, evidently the event held in May 2005 in Montreal, which was attended by at least one sex worker from Finland. Among the organizers of the event, in addition to the city of Montreal and the university, were many actors from movements promoting sex workers' rights around the world.

Certainly, many groups who are subjugated by the prevailing power structure may question the situation based on their own experience, but it is difficult to express your point of view outside the societal ideological machine. It is therefore necessary, from the perspective of social change, to challenge the myths that demonize any oppressed group. (Collins 1991, 26, 104.) Only a positive and active identity makes operability possible, and it would seem that the model for this in Finland comes at least in part through the international sex workers' movement.

Second, interestingly, Sara turns the victim discourse prevalent in the media on its head when she describes the activity of the decision-makers using notions that are usually used in connection with such things as violence in couple relationships or workplace bullying. Prior to Sara's written interventions, many public discussions defined prostitution as violence by pimps and clients. But Sara makes the point that sex workers' experience of violence was primarily systemic, coming from those quarters who like to pose as sex workers' 'protectors'. Other chains of messages started to appear in the chatroom, where sex workers understood the discrimination against them no longer as bullying by individuals, but instead as part of a wider systemic labelling:

"Today I went to a regular health centre about a prescription. I'd made an appointment with a doctor. This woman asked me what work I do, and I said that I was a sex worker. She asked whether I didn't want to study, because you can't make a career out of this. And I said but many people do. And she looked a bit dubious and said but wouldn't you rather study. No, I said, I like this. It suits me. […] It somehow seems that not many people understand or know anything. Then she started looking on the web for the phone numbers of the police and support groups if I need them sometime. I said that I don't need them because we have a really good support point, Pro support and this forum. I got the feeling somehow that she thought I was a bit dumb, because I'm young and no one my age could want to be a prostitute and live that way for years to come. I don't understand why not. I think this is the best work I've come across. And if I'd said to her that this is the best work I've come across and I like it a lot and I like men, she would have probably looked at me like ahaa hmmm… Why can't they understand that people are different and there's no need to always push your opinions, even though you don't understand someone else. I mean, I don't understand her. Why would anyone want to work in a health centre?" (F, Iina.)

"In this 'profession', if and when you're, say, robbed, then you're asked: why are you in such a dangerous profession? But no one puts the same question to police officers or firemen, or think that it's their fault is something happens to them. And would you ask sales assistants how can they go to work if they get robbed or say that they shouldn't do such dangerous work. And what about nurses and other caregivers, who may be threatened even at knifepoint? Sure, people's sympathies are usually with them. But when you're a prostitute, then people think that it's your own fault because you've chosen that sort of work. But everyone should be entitled to a safe working environment, regardless of their profession, and that goes for prostitutes too!" (F, Sara.)

Although the word 'stigma' does not appear in these chatroom messages, my understanding of these writings is that they are cognizant of systemic stigma. When sex workers regard themselves as a group and have the opportunity to swap experiences, earlier individual perceptions of environmental aggression start to appear as discrimination against a particular marginal group and its collective characteristics. When I started this study (in 2002 and 2003), I met many sex workers who assumed that the media myths were true of the majority of sex workers, and that they were the exceptions. Those I interviewed said that they certainly sell sex but denied that they were prostitutes, because they did not perceive the risk taking and victimhood associated with that as having anything to do with them. It became clear, though, as our mutual contacts proceeded, that there were many other 'exceptions' and that there had to be something seriously wrong with the prevalent perception of sex work.

"Ours is a profession that is not respected, and because of that we have to appreciate and respect ourselves extremely highly. So we're proud of our profession. For many of us it has probably taken a lot to enter the field. Tons of strength to all sisters in the trade." (F, Marke.)

The image offered by the cultural mainstream of the prostitute as either an immoral woman or passive victim is so completely negative that sex workers explicitly disassociate themselves from it. They would prefer to see their role more as healers than disease carriers, as teachers rather than degenerates, and as independent businesswomen instead of commodities. The talk of sex workers as sexperts is not just an opportune play on words, as it helps sex workers struggle from being objects to being producers of knowledge. (Bell 1994, 100, 109; Lady Johanna's homepage.)

Self-identification as part of a marginal group also enables political activity on many levels. Taru, for example, continually chooses to counteract whore myths. Despite the fact that it can lead to problems, she sometimes talks openly about her sex work – when she is in a bar, say – because she has found

that when they meet a sex worker "people no longer believe just anything". In the chatroom she argues "no one has the right to insult us and judge us when they don't know us. We don't insult a complete stranger when we're on the street":

"For example, just a few days ago there was this thing where a guy asked me (in the chatroom) something about how much does it cost. I answered with three question marks. Then he replied, 'oh I'm sorry, I was chatting earlier with someone here who was a whore.' Or prostitute. I don't remember. And I answered 'It was me, but when I'm chatting here I'm not' working. I don't want to talk about money matters.' Then this reply came 'Fuck it. Sorry I asked. I was just interested to know how much it costs to fuck you in the ass.' There were a few other messages in between, and then I replied 'you don't see me as a person. Your language changed immediately as soon as you knew you were talking to me.'" (I, Taru.)

"I've written articles on the media treatment of our human rights, and added that they are being violated so badly that we continually feel that we're 'worse' and 'abnormal' people, and we can't talk about our work openly and in our own names. […] Our work gets too little respect, and from now on I'll promote this work in this society as much as one person can. No one can change that. I don't see myself as someone who's worse as a person because I've worked as a whore, and I don't for one moment regret that I got into the field." (F, Heidi.)

One of the requirements of individual agency, according to Margaret Archer (284-287), is the possession of a (group) identity. Conversely, these identities may alter as result of often-unintended conflicts between interest groups. As I see it, it is precisely this that happened in the discussion forum. To be drawn to the sex workers' discussion forum took some experience of the common characteristics or interests of the sorts of people who make their living by selling sex (compare Goffman 1990, 35-36). A sense of shared identity nevertheless developed within the interaction in the forum, eventually constituting a community.

At the same time, the term *sex worker* appeared on the forum. **[89]** This renaming process was extremely important from the point of view of agency (Rowland & Klein 1996, 32). Although other names continued to be used (prostitute, slut, whore, hooker, etc.), the new concept altered the tone of these older terms, too, making them more nuanced. The sex worker was an active agent capable of making individual choices. The sex worker might encounter discrimination and be in a vulnerable position, but she was by no means merely an object. Moreover ,the sex worker was neither definitively good nor bad, but could act ethically or unethically:

"You have to accept that you can never know for sure what is wrong and what is right in any situation. It's just life, and you've got to have the courage to take risks. You have to take responsibility for the choices you make. How else would I know what to choose? It helps in some situations to talk about it with other people from different sides." (I, Leenu.)

The 2005 criminalization of buying sex was not the first time that the matter had been before the Finnish Parliament, as the law had already been planned during the term of the previous government. There were also other legal measures passed at the turn of the millennium that were problematic from the perspective of the seller. These did not, however, arouse a similar stir among sex workers, despite the fact that already at that time individual sex workers had links with the international whores' movement and so could draw on it for support and lobbying. It was not until the grouping of the discussion forum that the Finnish sex worker became established as a political subject. This gave rise to the counter community that Ann Ferguson (1997, 131-132) describes as a "network of people who share a critique of the existing order."

The forum became a base where sex workers working in isolation could swap ideas and find ways of improving their situation. Eventually, many sex workers announced that they intended to write to MPs so that decision-makers would know about their point of view. For some sex workers this was the first political act of their lives, apart perhaps from voting in elections. Together they discussed what issues would be worth raising and what sort of tone the letter should adopt.

"We would take up the problems concerning the professional identity of sex workers that the partial criminalization [of buying sex] would bring about. And we should mention the severe emotional impact of society's condemnation and disapproval of sex workers. The reproofs voiced by decision-makers sometimes come close to being psychological violence." (F Eeva.)

"In the emails [to MPs] I candidly took up the reasons that drove me to prostitution (the problems that I was then having in my life). I also described what the work is in practice and how it has affected me: I explained that I just do the sorts of things that suit me and that I don't bother anyone by what I do. I also took up the downsides of the work (those to do with my private life). I asked the MPs how they intended to settle the issue of our earnings, if there are fewer clients (in other words, will they take responsibility for the future of prostitutes, if 'business' starts to be unviable). Then I wrote about how I believe that the ban on buying would affect us (insecurity, etc.)." (F, Aura.)

A little later two or more core groups of activists emerged out of the forum, who participated in the political debate by granting interviews, writing for the media and lobbying policy makers. (I myself attended three meetings with parliamentary groups together with two sex workers and a representative of the Pro Centre Finland.) This activism may have had a direct influence, as the government's draft bill, which was submitted unanimously, was crucially altered at the committee stage.

Following the struggle over the criminalization of clients, the forum's daily political discussion waned. But the forum did not return to its old form, as the forum community continued to try to exert some influence on the general ground rules of commercial sex. In addition to establishing common warning systems, it evened out prices by making mutual comparisons and informing sex workers who were outside the forum of the prevailing rates. Everyone prices their services in slightly different ways, but there is always a minimum price at a certain point in a certain context. To undercut it is considered stupid and devoid of solidarity (Høigård & Finstad 1992, 41).

"I have called up nearly all the independent girls I know and urged them to agree on a standard set of rates. I'm a real cartel manageress!" (F, Minttu.)

In addition, reports of offences filed by sex workers show that some of them are willing and able to demand their rights. Participants in the forum support sex workers who have been victims of crimes and encourage them to report what has happened to (certain trustworthy) police. The situation is perhaps not unheard of, but globally is more the exception than the rule. In many countries sex workers struggle against the disregard and even violence directed at them by the police. **[90]**

"My own attitude is that I'm not doing anything criminal, and that we certainly use police services if we need them." (I, Camilla.)

Although the union for sex workers, SALLI – United Sex Professionals of Finland, has not operated to the same extent as the sex workers' peer forum, its significance in the public discussion has been notable. SALLI has also been involved in the work of the authorities, including the follow-up report on human trafficking (Steering Group proposal…2007, 4). Elsewhere in the world it appears that the trajectory involves a slow transition from human rights organizations of a general nature towards sex workers' trade unions (Gall 2006, 184-186). Sex workers' organizations in the UK (IUSW), Germany (Verdi) and the Netherlands (FNV) have managed to negotiate a place for themselves in the trade union confederations (Ward 2007, 20). In Argentina, the sex workers' union AMMAR has achieved the legalization of sex work with the support of the central organization of trade unions. Such solidarity also works the other way, as sex workers have for their part given their backing to the struggle by teachers over wages. (Reynaga 2006, 67.)

In many countries, though, the professional organization of sex workers is a difficult issue, as it requires the recognition of prostitution as work (Barry 1984, 134). Working in isolation, the lack of professional identity and the need for anonymity due to whore stigma also undermine the organization of sex workers (Jonker & Wijers 2007, 114). The trade union movement in Finland has been very slow to include sex workers on its agenda.

Carnivalism

There are some internet sites where clients keep a "log" of their encounters with sex workers. **[91]** The stated function of these reports is consumer awareness, but they evidently often meet a need for clients' to express their fantasies and to relive their experiences (Bishop & Robinson 2003, 33). Such reports may be full of praise, but they can also be offensive. In general, it is not appropriate for the sex worker in question to give her version of events, though other sex workers may intervene when reports are unusually malicious and defend their colleague. Sex workers sometimes also write counter reports about clients on restricted sites.

The following quotes are exceptional, because they contain negative descriptions of clients, are freely accessible to all via unrestricted forums and concern the well-known usernames of regular clients:

"Sigma: I was expecting someone similar to the photo I saw on the forum, but I was mistaken. A yuppie-type company manager, blond and sharp-eyed, groomed hair. Penis was quite OK, but below par in bed. I wouldn't take him again no matter how much he paid me." (F, Isabel.)

"Sigma: Asked to take a photo of his asshole." (F, Marianeito.)

"Sikanen: Totally phlegmatic mound of flesh. The only good thing is that he doesn't speak. Always calls 30 minutes before the arranged time and asks 'shall I come now?'... geez! Complains every time and asks for money back for even a couple of minutes. What if the sex lasts a minute and the shower takes 20? I give him a 'D'." (F. MiraW.)

These comments were made on April Fools' Day (1 April 2006) and are intended as jokes. They are probably imaginary or based on experiences with other clients. But they are accurate in at least two ways: some of the usernames had perhaps been clients of the sex workers in question and one function of the messages was to instruct actual clients. A similar example is offered by *Whorezine*, published in San Francisco, which occasionally produces *Johnzine* to instruct clients in business-like clientship.

The main thing about the quotes, however, is the way the string of messages turns regular practice upside down. The idea of the whole forum is that it is the clients' privilege to write up whatever reports they want about sex workers, and that sex workers have no chance to rebut what is written about them, even if none of the encounters ever happened. **[92]** So, what's going on?

I use the term 'carnivalesque resistance' to describe the element of mirth that is typical of many sex workers' communities. Rather than seeking incremental improvements, it uses laughter to question the whole mythology and moral system on which the marginalization of sex workers is based. "During carnival time it is possible to live only according to its laws, that is, to the laws of carnivalesque freedom. Carnival has a universal character; it is a special condition of the whole world—its regeneration and renewal in which all participate." (Bakhtin 1995, 9.) Carnival contains the seeds of revolution. It not only challenges prevailing hierarchies and bureaucracies but also attacks the hegemony upon which they are based. It creates a separate situation out of the everyday, one in which its own norms rule. (Bakhtin 1991, 232, 242.)

It is difficult to document this dimension in black and white. Sex workers who commented on this text acknowledged the idea, but it is a challenge to articulate it for outsiders. Without the notion of carnivalism, however, the description of sex workers' means of control would remains incomplete. Finnish communities of sex workers are so young and unestablished that they are only just beginning to construct their own counter culture, which is why in this section I draw on more examples from other countries than elsewhere in this study. Their rationale nevertheless applies to a Finnish context, too, and we find a similar vein of thinking in Finnish networks.

As with the rest of capitalist production, commercial sex is based on the pursuit of standardization, norms and profit. There are however agents and sexualities that live in its shadows that challenge both the commercial sex mainstream and society's sexual norms. Alongside standard internet porn there are equivalent websites that concentrate on amateur porn, political porn or art porn. These blur the boundaries between the commercial and non-commercial, but also between what is decent and indecent. (Attwood 2007, 442, 450.)

With carnivalism Mikhail Bakhtin (1995, 11, 84) refers to the mediaeval culture of laughter, which separated the people from the everyday and, on the other hand, from the official traditions of the church. **[93]** Carnivals were often held in connection with church holy days and were a part of the tumult of the marketplace, where people congregated, often journeying from far away to do so. Carnivals typically featured colourful processions, songs, scenes from plays and their own language of symbols, with the entire community taking part. The confident laugh of the continual renewal of the human community was part of the carnival spirit, which turned everything topsy-turvy, refusing to honour hierarchies.

"All the symbols of the carnival idiom are filled with this pathos of change and renewal, with the sense of the gay relativity of prevailing truths and authorities. We find here a characteristic logic, the peculiar logic of the 'inside out' (*à l'envers*), of the 'turnabout' of a continual shifting from top to bottom, from front to rear [...]."

(Translated by Helena Iswolski)

There have been earlier studies of sex workers' communities from the perspective of carnivalism and laughter (Bell 1994, 43; Bell 1995; Sanders 2004). I became interested in the subject in autumn 2005, when I had the opportunity to attend a conference of European sex workers in Brussels. The evening celebration in particular clearly brought out the carnival theme. Questioning sexual norms, gender roles and laws on promiscuity, the programme featured glitter and feather boas, performances of orgasms and submission, dressing up and undressing. During one of the dance numbers, I realized what gave the occasion its special atmosphere. It was not to do with the performance, which could have been the main attraction of any erotic bar, but the way it was received: the audience, which was predominantly female, laughed, cheered and urged the performers on. There was a complete lack of any sense of sinful sex, which we find replicated in strip clubs from one continent to another.

The dance number was in two parts. In the first, a hapless sex worker was resigned to servicing brutishly behaved men to the accompaniment of depressing music. In the second, the turning point, the music took on a fighting tempo and the vile client chastised. (In another similar performance the culprit to get its just desserts was the government). As the dancer finished her performance with a particularly skilful move, the audience grew quiet and then exploded with a storm of applause. As the naked performer scampered through the audience, she received hugs, whistles of approval and pats on the back.

The source of strength of the Brussels conference was apparent: "We are here whether you like it or not. We are many, we laugh together and don't care one iota for your oppressive norms."

It is no coincidence that the spirit of carnivalism described by Bakhtin fits the communities of sex workers so aptly, given that they have to face the remnants of a medieval Christian moral system that was subversively mirrored by the carnival. Although our sense of justice has become secularized, religion continues to regulate our understanding of right and wrong in the arena of sexual morality (Kääriäinen 2003, 250–251).

There is a second feature of commercial sex, however, which brings out carnivalesque resistance. I refer here to the inner ambivalence we find in commercial sex, which grows with the clash of opposites. In commercial sex the separate proclivities of the mainstream culture may be in mutual interaction or even meld. (Compare Bakhtin 1991, 225-226, 256.) A whore can be – and usually is – a mother, a man can be a woman (transprostitute), violence can be gentle (SM) and sin can be holy (the holy prostitute).

"The carnival brings closer, unites, engages and joins the holy to the secular, the high to the low, the great to the insignificant, the wise to the stupid, and so on." (Bakhtin 1991,181.) Carnivalism's opposites are strongly present in sex work, and so the carnival is a natural aspect of the counter culture that grows up around sex work.

Bakhtin (1991, 247, 254-255) also writes of *marketplaces* and *thresholds* as typical metaphors of carnivalism. Both are good descriptions of the carnivalesque relationship between sex workers and mainstream society. The marketplace refers directly to the site of the carnival, and more generally to the public space open to all. Notions of the *public woman* and the *street woman* reveal how working in a public space separates the sex worker from other women, whose place is at home in the private sphere (Lindstrom 2003, 233). The threshold, on the other hand, means in Bakhtin's carnivalism a borderline or crisis that forces and enables a choice. It is the point that separates the times of order and carnival from one another or from the unforeseen consequences of a familiar order. Earlier, in Chapter 4, I wrote of whore stigma as a threshold, a gatekeeper between mainstream culture and the marginal.

Practically all sex workers spend the majority of their lives in roles other than that of a sex worker. In this sense commercial sex is like a state of emergency, its own special world, whose borders are further reinforced by the stigma of mainstream society. You can make a ritual difference between the 'working me' and the 'private me' by doing such things as using a different bedspread for clients or, when not working, by dressing to highlight ordinariness. Changing roles may also extend to your own erotic situation: Tiina and Camilla say that home sex remains on an even keel because of the opportunity that domination work affords to pursue submission tendencies.

A third aspect of sex work that relates to carnivalism is its straightforward relationship with slum-naturalism (Bakhtin 1991, 169; Bakhtin 1995, 284-285). Both are inherently characterized by the profane, the corporeal and the sensuous, as well as a tendency to challenge the limits of propriety and familiarity. Because of the centrality of sex life, the body's orifices and nestedness with the body of another individual (penetration, pregnancy) are foregrounded in an indecent manner. The ways of dressing associated with prostitution highlight the individual's orifices and thus also the lack of separateness between oneself and others – never mind that in the movies the character wearing the mini skirt and heavy make-up is generally typical of a form of sex work where the client has to be able distinguish the sex worker from other passers-by.

Why then laughter? How is it supposed to augment control and give grist for resistance? The strength of carnivalism lies in its power to counter fear. And though fear is often only partly or temporarily vanquished, doing so provides a necessary breathing space. We have to bear in mind that to the sex worker the stability of the mainstream culture signifies control, censure and even violence. Laughter is victory "over moral fear, which shackles, cramps and clouds people's consciousness" (Bakhtin 1995, 83).

> *"We had a laugh once when we were at the airport and they checked our bags and put them through the X-ray, because they were full of all sorts of dildos, condoms, underwear and high heels. And they must've thought bloody whores [laughs]." (I, Milla.)*

You can counter the fear that the mainstream culture evokes within your micro-community by systematically acting against sexual norms you find oppressive. Such communities have their own rules (protecting the identity and wishes of others), but there are no common codes in the area of gender and sexuality and each encounter is the result of individual negotiation. You may play down or highlight gender differences by cross-dressing or simply with the stylized carnival costumes of one of the commercial sex genres.

Bakhtin (1995, 230-231) points out that the undisputed mistresses of the carnival night were promiscuous women and that the prostitute was central to the celebration's symbolism. Pat Califia (1994, 207) observes that though sex workers who work the streets use certain motifs of femininity in order to make it easier to attract clients, the ultra-feminine dressing is hardly unambiguous. Like an office worker, the sex worker uses a variety of high-heels, dresses and accessories, and these also signify different things for them. These concern two kinds of gender-bound work that on the face of it involve using an identical "outfit", but which in reality send out entirely different signals. The sex worker's dress symbolizes femininity but also the complete opposite.

When talking with sex workers I've continually come across feelings of bitterness about "feminists", which I interpret as meaning the kind of feminism that prevails in Finland that takes an abolitionist approach to prostitution. There is a similar conflict in other countries, and part of the feminist movement refuses outright to have contacts with sex workers' special interest groups (ward 2007, 15, 20). Within these disputes, trends that lean towards the radical feminist tradition highlight by their very seriousness the carnivalesque nature of sex workers' communities. There is a wide array of satirical writings, songs and performances in the culture of the whore movement that targets representatives of governments and in particular their feminist representatives:

Sheila Jeffreys you're so fuckin obscene,
You'd take my job away coz you're so mean.
Academic pimps are all the same,
Givin feminists a ba-aaa-ad na-aa-me,
I'm the whore you won't ignore NO don't ignore me yeah me.
I'll be conscious while I watch you suck on me yeah me.

Singin'
I love hockin' my hole,
Put another buck in the hot box baby,
I love hockin' my hole,
Come and take some time to fuck with me.

It's time to take a stand,
Come join my whoring ba-aa-and
(Jett 2006)

The theme of laughter and the lost carnivalesque marketplace also echo through the culture of protest among sex workers. In demonstrations in Europe, sex workers carry red umbrellas as symbols of beauty and struggle. **[94]** In the United States, many protests are linked to artistic performances and in some Asian countries sex workers hold torch-lit processions. In order to safeguard their anonymity it has become customary to don masks, which also increases the carnivalesque nature of these colourful demonstrations.

Sluts Unite! and *Whore Power!* are well-known slogans internationally. By altering contexts sex workers are consciously trying to undermine the power of stigmatizing words by giving them a positive content and by demanding rights expressly as whores (Bell 1994, 107). Sexual minority movements have done the same thing by taking over the term *dyke* (Chapkis 1997, 26). This appropriation has succeeded, as the function of concepts that to the mainstream culture are inappropriate, indecent or otherwise prohibited, change their purpose and acquire the "universal tone of laughter" (Bakhtin 1995, 18).

> *"I think that only the members of each group should be able to use the kinds of word about themselves or others that have derogatory overtones. For example, I can freely call myself a whore and maybe my colleagues too, because you know that I'm also disparaging myself and/or I'm trying to be funny. I'd never call people with black skin niggers, because I'm not one of them. And if I see that some guy calls us whores and in addition uses offensive expressions generally, I wouldn't want him as a customer, because in my view he's got bad manners." (F, Minttu.)*

The visible ennoblement of derisory concepts perpetuates the myth of the holy prostitute **[95]**, in other words the elevation of the whore to the status of priestess. In this way sex work is viewed primarily as a spiritual activity and its practitioners as shamans. (Chapkis 1997, 194). The myth of the holy prostitute is often viewed as deriving from the *hetaerae* of ancient Greece (Bell 1994, 19) or from the Bible's Mary Magdalene, whom many Catholic sex workers consider their patron saint (Ryder 2006, 62-63).

Rebellion

Stigma divides women into two classes: the sinful and sexual whore, and the caring and asexual Madonna. The destinies of these two categories are nevertheless intertwined by the same dynamic: whore stigma punishes, but the mission of its social sanctions is to put the reins on all women. (Saarikoski 2001, 122-125.) The dichotomy of "respectable" and "fallen" women limits the freedom of respectable women from two angles: within the gender hierarchy their superiors are men, while their inferiors are fallen women, both of whom have direct access to sexual autonomy, geographical mobility and economic self-help. In Gail Pheterson's (1996, 11-12) view a woman is a whore and is punishable precisely when she ventures into those areas of privilege that belong to men.

Figure 5: Position in the sexual order and access to resources, according to Gail Pheterson (1996, 11-12)

Over the course of Christian history, society has split gender morality into three groups: men, women and non-women, or whores. Whores were everything that the Virgin Mary wasn't. They had sex, were not tied to the kitchen stove and sometimes even controlled their own finances. Sexually active women pose a threat to the system above all on a symbolic level, but whoredom also entailed privileges that otherwise belonged only to men. In some periods whoredom was the only route to independence open to women and yet a woman's selfhood was easily interpreted as whoredom.

Christian patriarchy was therefore based on men's stronger prerogative concerning mobility, sex and economic resources. Whereas the home was considered to be the woman's sphere of responsibility, the public space and work that required travel belonged to men. Men were not usually required to refrain from premarital sex or to be faithful in marriage. The desire to instruct and be obeyed was more permissible for them than for women. Men above all ruled and rule the economy.

The bottom rung of this hierarchy, the perspective of the whore, is rarely examined. And, yet, sex workers have represented the most mobile segment of women. They travelled and still make long journeys, for example with armies or to conceal their profession from those close to them. The sex worker has also had a wholly distinct relationship with sex, because part of the attraction of commercial sex is the illusion it carries of women with an insatiable appetite for sex. Sex workers do not just sell sex; they sell the experience of being desired. At the same time they happen to have the kind of specialized knowledge to which few had access before the internet. Selling sex also assured women of a better level of income than the alternatives that were open to other poor women. In many countries it has been practically the only way for them to obtain money of their own. **[96]**

We cannot conclude on the basis of my research that people who do not adjust to the sexual norms of mainstream society consciously opt to do sex work, or that sex work emboldens them to question these norms. It would seem at any rate that very few of the sex workers I have encountered would sign up to the prevailing ideal that sex should be confined only to romantic relationships:

> *"It's quite strange that many people themselves have quite a lot of one-night stands - pick up a man from a bar and then go to bed. Then they say loudly 'I'd definitely never become a whore, I could never imagine taking a payment'. And that's when I think that when all's said and done you're pretty stupid [laughs]" (I, Krisse.)*

What perhaps initially made them sceptical about this belief is their personal discovery that pleasurable sex can at times take place within the context of impersonal client relations. The same seems to apply concerning their encounters with married clients who, despite buying sex, hold their marriages in high regard (Lohikivi 2005). What stands out in the following excerpts is the independent and willing woman who knows that she is breaking norms but enjoys her position as the subject of sex:

> *"In some ways I enjoy it that I'm breaking some taboos and on a certain level doing something that's naughty and not allowed. And it's not a terrible thing that I occupy this margin that everyone despises. It's also kind of exciting and it's brave." (I, Mimosa.)*

> *"I couldn't stand it and didn't want to lie anymore at all about what I really do. I'm fine with my work and myself and I don't need the sorts or people around me who can't tolerate my choices. My parents, sister, all my friends and my man know what I do for a living and still accept me as the same Heidi as ever." (F, Heidi.)*

The prevailing sexual culture delimits our understanding of sexuality, though many communities of sex workers are challenging it and trying to redefine sexuality (Zatz 1997, 297). Tawna Dudash (1997, 112) writes how her journey beyond admissible sexuality has in her case meant the disintegration of the whore stigma. She and other sex workers form a community that discusses the taboos of many women's sexuality openly and without moralizing. My research material also reveals a criticism of permissible sexuality: Leenu explains how during her sex change process she fantasized about living as ordinary a life as possible as a woman. After actually living as a woman and coming up against the assumptions faced by women, she opted for the least conventional form of femininity, prostitution.

Of course in most cases people take up sex work for other reasons, and if their spirit of revolt is awakened, it is because of the discrimination they experience on the job. Iina was evicted from her rented apartment due to complaints by her neighbour, something she interprets as an attempt to control her sexual behaviour:

> *"I didn't know anything until I got home, and it came as a total shock to find out – bloody hell, if I move out I'll send them a letter where I say I fuck my heart out and I can send you a tape of us moaning and groaning." (F, Iina.)*

> *"Well, in so far as it's tough to be a woman, if you like sex and want to work in the sex trade. People really think that way that men simply have their way with you. But it's not like that. Because anyway such a lot is targeted at you, then you start to wonder about it, that why is it that people think the way they do. [...] I think that when you talk about equality, then shouldn't it be so, in the name of equality, that women should be allowed to be sexual? And when you talk about porn oppressing women, then, if we're talking about equality, why is it that porn doesn't oppress men? Why can't women be seen as the receiving party and as equal?" (I, Elina.)*

Holly Wardlow (2004, 1019, 1034) has studied the women of the Huli of Papua New Guinea, who have sex with many men for payment. She interprets the motive of the women as anger and rebellion directed at the control by men of the tribal system. The compensation paid for a bride means that chastity is tremendously important financially for the family, and that for women promiscuity is an extreme way to avenge unfair treatment by a father or spouse.

In Finland too, in some contexts, sex work may extend from questioning prevailing sexual morals to being a general criticism of the system. Some sex workers consider selling sex as a political act in itself, or a challenge to a system they feel to be unjust. One Swedish sex worker (Interviews Pheterson 1996, 63) explains how she returned to prostitution after a five-year gap, "not for money but revolution". Minna says that she started in the trade because of her experiences of injustice, in addition to needing the money:

"They said at social security that if you quit high school then we can give you money. I was always taught that everyone has the right to an education. And I thought it was so wrong that I'm underaged and alone and the social security people just say 'quit high school'. I think it was plain wrong. Everyone should be entitled to an education." (I, Minna.)

Sex workers' communities and collaboration cannot remain unaffected by the marginal position of prostitution and the mythology that surrounds it. Only a very small number of sex workers identify with the trade and think it important to achieve rights explicitly as sex workers. It is far more usual to choose to conceal one's work and minimize its negative impacts with respect to oneself as a survival strategy. But at least some sex workers see themselves more or less as rebels. They have a subversive, anti-mainstream idea of how "the system should work" and "how people should be treated" (Whelehan 2001, 135). Some of them are actively involved in defending sex workers' rights, while others think that sex work itself is a manifest critique of the system.

I wrote in Chapter 3 how a person's previous experience of marginalization erodes the whore stigma's deterrent factor, making it easier for them to begin sex work. But the example also works another way: erosion of the deterrent effect does not simply lower the threshold to selling sex; rather, selling sex, and in particular moving between the roles of the respectable and disreputable woman, threatens the norms of virtue that are set for women's sexuality. In the figure of the prostitute, as the media depicts her, we find a symbolized threat to bourgeois values (Hubbard 1998).

7. Summary

The discourse on prostitution has typically comprised common generalizations based on a limited body of localized and select information. The trend has been to see sex selling as something whose causes and effects are replicated immutably regardless of cultural, social and historical context. In their study of Norway, for instance, Høigård and Finstad (1992, 132) assert that prostitution in any form inevitably leads to women being emotionally devastated. They believe that it is precisely in this respect that Nordic prostitution studies contribute decisively to the international debate on the issue.

The question of the psychological condition of sex workers goes beyond the material I use here (and this is also the case with Høigård's and Finstad's study). It is perfectly possible that sex workers have a personal history, including traumatic experience, that predispose them to become interested in the sex trade. But during the course of this study I did not come across anything to suggest that psychological problems accounted for their involvement in sex work or that these problems were of such a magnitude as to clearly differentiate sex work from any other work. Such pathologization-based studies have little to do with the everyday practice of sex workers but are instead created to serve economic and social morality interests.

The debate on either force or voluntariness in sex work precludes the examination of a whole group of important themes. It does not take into account that both dimensions are evident in the sex trade, often simultaneously, and the perspective largely depends on which of them gains dominance. Commercial sex is tied in with the rest of society and therefore the situation of its practitioners varies, both in their mutual context and individually. People who are engaged in sex work have different backgrounds, motives, practices and future ambitions. What they do signifies different things to different sex workers, and the impacts of selling sex differ.

This study is based on interviews with 25 working sex workers and online discussion with about 60 others. Material gathered in such a way is inevitably slanted and, because in general little is known about prostitution, it is uncertain how good a general view it gives of sex work in Finland. My methodology was based on long-term collaboration with my informants, which meant that people who do occasional gigs as sex workers were not included in the study. Nor did I cover men who sell sex to other men. It is likely that the experiences of these groups of people depart in some ways from my research material and that studying them would further enhance our understanding of the many facets of commercial sex.

The motives for doing sex work are bound up with what else is on offer, the individual's own situation in life and the prevailing conditions and procedures in sex work. Those in the strongest position in Finland are Finnish sex workers. They enjoy the support of the welfare state safety net, have enough cultural capital to be able to work without pimps and are able to choose their clients. This group generated the majority of my research material, and so this study best describes their experiences. In particular, cultural and linguistic unfamiliarity undermines the situation of sex workers from abroad, as do the racism of the formal jobs market, the absence of civic rights and tough rules on residence permits. Migrants with no language skills or documents are especially vulnerable.

Nevertheless, and despite these reservations, the information I obtained from very different people and my own observations appears to have a coherent inner logic. This underlying line of reasoning, which departs from general myths about prostitution and is one that sex workers widely recognize, recurs from one source to another, constituting the inner rationale of the profession. It is this observation that is the key challenge and finding of this study. I thus ended up describing sex work as a social exodus from the financial and sexual norms that are set specifically for women.

In so far as we can find a common tendency, the question is one of people who are prepared to take active and unusual decisions to achieve their aims. The experience of selling sex can be traumatizing, but also emancipating. In their roles as whores, sex workers are an intensely stigmatized group and thereby particularly susceptible to being exploited by clients, officials and the surrounding community. And yet there are things about sex work that increase one's life management: anonymous paid sex in itself throws into question the holy connection between sex and couple relationships, while because of

its cost efficiency sex work brings freedom from (low paid women's) wage labour.

The most usual reason for taking up sex work is money. Poverty may be absolute or relative. What is more important is that for many people sex work offers a better option for earning an income than other alternatives available to them. They take up sex work because they are hindered from access to the formal jobs market or because it enables them to remain outside it. In some cases, the escape from the jobs market is only partial and sex work supplements income from formal wage labour or covers occasional spending peaks.

Sex work is not a competitive alternative to any sort of work, but it is in relation to the low paid and strenuous professions in the service sector. Indeed sex work can be regarded as a refuge for young women escaping from "shitty jobs". **[97]** It is hard to justify why these people should surrender their independence and work for an employer that offers no security, improvement opportunities or even a decent wage.

The exodus from the poor conditions of wage labour is also a journey towards more gratifying use of time. Sex work does not usually generate a big income, but the cost efficiency of selling sex lies in the more preferable compensation of additional time of your own. This is not a matter of choosing between working and lazing around doing nothing, but rather, to paraphrase André Gorz (1982, 18-19), of distinguishing the job you do to earn money, which is heteronomic work determined externally, and the work you do that is self-determined and autonomous. **[98]** Sex work makes it possible to invest time in what interests you, such as studying, your family or pastimes.

With this in mind, sex work can be understood as a struggle for self-determination, both in heteronomic work (the independence of sex work compared to stringently controlled service sector work) and away from that work towards a sphere of self-determined production (the relative cost-efficiency of sex work, where there is more time left for "your own things"). Sex work questions the fundamental idea of the wage labour society that working class women should accept whatever (formal sector) work, under whatever conditions and at whatever personal cost. From this perspective, selling sex threatens to undermine the presiding social system, and so the formal and informal sanctions imposed on it start to make sense.

Sex work also declares war on more traditionally accepted sexual norms. There are grounds, based on my research material, to consider commercial sex as a sexual subculture, which people seek in order to realize some specific form of sexual gratification. Sex workers who have been in the trade for some time, or who are returning to it after a break, particularly emphasize this element. People opt for sex work at least partly because of its climate of tolerance, as the commercial sex terrain accepts those forms of sex that mainstream culture regards as perversions. The sex worker is allowed to be "naughty" and sexually active, something that many interviewees find difficult in non-commercial contexts. People who belong to different gender and sexual minorities form a prominent group among sex workers.

Sex work may offer pleasure and orgasms or a channel of intimacy and care giving. It attracts people for the strong element of adventurism it features, or, as one interviewee put it, "prostitution is women's warrior culture." On the other hand its contractual relationship clarifies and increases predictability compared to non-commercial dating culture, which is based on the ideal of spontaneity. People who seek sex work rate excitement and new experiences highly, but want to write their own adventure scripts.

In Finland, prostitution's internal power relations appear to favour the seller, which may provide the sustenance for more general life management. Sex workers describe how relations with clients give them feelings of power, beauty and self-confidence which they carry over into their other sexual relationships. They have found it liberating to see that a sexually active, openly pleasure-seeking woman can also be desirable.

But the situation alters immediately when the power arrangement wavers. My material also reveals grievous experiences of forced sex, when for some reason the client refuses to respect the limits or when financial pressure forces one to sell sex. That the situation of sex workers in Finland is better than in most parts of the world does not yet mean that it is equal in relation to the rest of the population. Everyone who works in the trade suffers from the whore stigma to some extent. The label requires that one leads a psychologically draining double life, makes it hard to quit sex work and is an obstacle to professional organization. Stigma has also resulted in legislation that, contrary to its intentions, undermines the position of sex workers and drives them deeper into the margins.

Stigma is one of the most decisive factors when sex workers weigh up the pros and cons of selling sex. It is so strong that it is only in exceptional circumstances and under duress that they defy it. Sex work is not, then, an available option for just anyone, and it is likely that faced with a situation where they could choose, the majority would never start to sell sex. For one to end up in the trade there have to be one or more underlying factors present that make it possible for you to deviate from the accepted norm. These include:

1) A previous experience of being marginalized, whereby the deterrent of the whore stigma is not as strong (school bullying).
2) A strong need to control and "get by" on one's own (success at school and eating disorders).
3) A knowledge and experience of alternative lifestyles (abundant travel, enjoying reading).
4) Sexuality that deviates from the norm (being sexually active, bi, trans).
5) Diminished chances of getting a place in the formal jobs market (ethnicity, sexual minorities),
6) A need for quick money (students, drug addicts).
7) Access to commercial sex networks (acquaintances, internet, data retrieval skills).

But stigma is not a matter of immutable external conditions. Rather, we find in my research material a variety practices of control and resistance by which the sex worker can try to minimize the impact of stigma. This can be done by heeding one's intuition to counteract the risks of client contacts, exerting emotional control over situations and using small safety strategies. The experienced professional knows how to handle clients and place her own limits; she can identify dangerous situations and follow the trade's inner professional ethics. In the absence of external supervision and because of the psychological pressure of the work, the only way to cope is to set and stick to your own limits. In recent years especially, sex workers have built up their own forms of peer support.

There are a small number of sex workers who consider sex work as a form of political activism. SALLI – United Sex Professionals of Finland was launched in 2002, but individual sex workers have also sought to improve their situation by writing to decision-makers, giving media interviews and talking about their work when meeting people in ordinary situations and on internet discussion forums. Some regard sex work as an intrinsically political activity, and as a rebellion against society and above all its sexual norms.

There is nothing revolutionary in my observations concerning the motives associated with sex work and the plurality of power relations. On the contrary, there has been an abundance of such observations from various fields of sex work and different parts of the world, particularly in relation to other earnings opportunities (Pasko 2002, 50-51; Chapkis 1997, 22; Sanders 2004; Day 2007; Brewis & Linstead 2000). Contrary media myths do not therefore derive from a lack of academic enquiry, rather its minimal impact on the general debate. **[99]**

There has been conspicuously less research on the complex relationship between facets of sex work and sexuality. The reason the subject gets skirted is perhaps because during the heyday of the radical feminists sexuality was the central focus, and sex work research grew up largely as a backlash against this tradition. Previous research had viewed its subject as a passive victim, while in sex work studies the aim was to highlight the economic aspect of sex selling, the contexts of the work and the impact of many simultaneous power structures.

My evidence nevertheless indicates that it is possible to analyse the sexual dimension of sex work in the same manner as sex work studies have done from the perspective of employment, that is, by simultaneously locating the potentials, mechanisms and conditions for both alienation and emancipation. In some respects Sophie Day's (2007, 200-203) study supports my point, and it is likely that in the future sex work researchers will take more of an interest in sexuality.

Sex workers are in a vulnerable position, and some of them have less autonomy and face more coercion and hazards than their more privileged colleagues. But the paucity of freedom and options derive not from sex work *per se*, but from abuse, poverty, racism, drug problems, a weak position on the jobs market, inexperience and/or desperation. On the other hand, the emancipatory potential of sex work is not universal, but rather is linked to cultural factors that in certain situations support the agency of the

sex worker. We can only understand the relationship of exploitation and autonomy in commercial sex as a multi-dimensional phenomenon that is embedded in different ways in society's structures.

From the sex work perspective the most important vector of social power is *sexuality*, as its mechanisms unite all sex workers via stigma. There is a complex set of norms that regulates the individual's sexual relations, in terms of who you are allowed to have sex with, in what way, where and how often. And it is also through sexual norms that distinctions linked to *gender*, *class* and *ethnicity* are determined. The sex worker therefore stands at the crossroads of four power hierarchies, casting doubt over them all.

The middle class of sex workers in Finland is made up of white, Finnish women who sell heterosex. They are privileged in relation to their ethnic or male colleagues, yet in mainstream society femininity makes them underdogs. Women who end up as middle-class sex workers usually have no other options on the formal jobs market besides disparaged blue-collar work. It is true that remaining a monogamous, low-paid woman guarantees you a stable social position, but it is the experience of sex workers that this leaves only slim opportunities for emancipation. Many of the interviewees in this study, took much pride in the fact that they had the courage to "take their life in their own hands".

Appendix: empirical material

The empirical information I used for this study was based on a three-year period of ethnographic fieldwork and the textual material it produced. This primarily comprised discussions on the sex workers' closed internet forum (about 11,000 messages from 60 sex workers over the period 2003-2006) and confidential interviews with 25 sex workers (20 women, two men and three transpeople).

The youngest of the interviewees was 16 and the oldest 65. In addition to Finns, the interviewees include a Russian, an Estonian and a Thai woman. The majority of the interviewees provided 'company for afternoon coffee', or classic sex, but some had experience of street prostitution, erotic dancing, phone sex and SM services. Some did sex work full time, while others obtained most of their income from other work. Four had got into the field through formal training, for instance via massage and bondage courses, the health care sector or counselling work. At the time of being interviewed, three had stopped sex work and four planned to do so in the near future.

I carried out the interviews with the sex workers in two parts. In accordance with Fritz Schützen's method (Hyvärinen & Löyttyniemi 2005, 194-197) I began with life story interviews with eight sex workers in 2003. They could decide for themselves at what point to start, what to say and in what order. The job of the researcher was to listen and concentrate but not to interrupt. The life story approach proved to be one that offered a multilayered picture from interviewees of themselves and of their life situation before the interview relationship had time to become settled and the researcher's own expectations known. I hoped that the interviewees would themselves fix the subject matter as far as possible. The guiding idea was that sex work is impossible to understand as something separate from one's more general life context, of which it is a part.

During the second round of meetings I asked open questions, which were related to issues that came up when the interviewees had initially talked about their lives. It was only after this that we moved on to subjects that interested me or which the interviewees had avoided. Because one of the problems with previous prostitution studies had been that they did not include the voices of sex workers themselves, I wanted to allow as much latitude as possible for their experiences. The subject matter of these largely determined the questions I asked during the second stage of the interviews, and indeed the subsequent structure of this book, which in connection with the sex workers' life stories yielded insights on how they ended up in the trade.

I did not purely follow Schützen's interview model, which aims to minimize guidance by the researcher. It turned out to be impossible to conduct a study based exclusively on interviewee signification, because people had signed up as sex workers to take part in a study of commercial sex. Following the life story interviews, I was able to switch to free discussion when it seemed feasible to do so. In addition, I would ask sex workers for their comments and assessments concerning matters that came up in other interviews.

Postmodern interview-based research favours flexible methods focussing on the interviewee's personal articulation of their own experiences. The aim has been to replace the traditional, hierarchically understood question-answer paradigm with a more discursive take on interviews. (Gubrium & Holstein 2003b, 30.) Most of my interviewees, however, had never heard of postmodernism and expected a fully structured, formal interview format. This came out, for instance, because many interviewees would have gladly "filled in a form on the web" instead of meeting. During the third phase, starting in autumn 2004, I departed completely from Schützen's method and drew up a detailed framework of questions, in which I re-examined themes that I had already dealt with, made some blind stitches and gathered background information on the interviewees and their working conditions. **[100]**

The number of interviewees increased from eight to 25. With the new ones, we started with the life story in free form, but the other questions were the same for all. Although I conducted multi-interviews with only the core group of eight, I interviewed all the sex workers I met, and who were willing to be interviewed, once.

There was as strong an element as possible of heterogeneity among the core group of eight sex workers. The idea was that that the specific characteristics of Finnish sex work would be highlighted best

when there were as few common denominators as possible among the interviewees. The group became more diverse than I could have ever wanted, with variations in terms of age, gender, nationality, place of residence, family situation, education, character and personal interests. I should point out, though, that the core group encompassed these qualities more by accident than as a result of deliberate selection. Though I made some cutbacks, there was relatively little scope for selection. **[101]** The selection of the final 17 interviewees took place more on the basis of accessibility and consent than research criteria.

My position as vice-chair of the Sex Workers Union facilitated my access to the commercial sex sector. **[102]** I had prior knowledge of key people in the sex trade, the police, social welfare sector and academic world. The sex workers I met in connection with union work recommended people to interview and encouraged people they knew to take part in the study, and this in turn yielded more contacts. But it took several months to find 25 committed interviewees.

In practice I used the snowball effect in recruiting interviewees, that is by first locating a number of people who suited the study criteria, and who brought others along. (Warren 2002, 87; Biernacki & Waldorf 1981.) There was a breakthrough of sorts in summer 2004, about a year after I started the study. This was when sex workers and others who are familiar with the profession started to apply to be interviewed. The turning point was clear, though it was hardly a mass surge, as beforehand only two people had joined the study on their own initiative.

There were probably various reasons for the sudden interest in the study. For one, the introduction in August 2004 of the law concerning pimping banned the newspaper and internet advertising of commercial sex. The law outraged the prostitution sector and was the first palpable expression of the consequences of the myths associated with prostitution. Many interviewees said that one of their motives for taking part in the study was their desire to undercut the general, and in their view mendacious and offensive, myths concerning sex work:

"I somehow wanted to further the acceptance of this profession, and it'd be a really great thing if this [interview] shows up some time in a thesis, and gets seen by the decision-makers. It'd be great if it spread general awareness that we're just as good as everyone else, that we're not the dregs of humanity." (I, Siveyden Sipuli)

"ANNA: Why did you get involved in the study?
SUSA: Simply because there are probably a lot of people like me, but we're the ones whose voice is never heard. Because we've no real need for it, because we don't want any help and be don't feel we're victims." (I, Susa)

My commitment to improving the situation of sex workers probably made it easier to find interviewees and build up trust in interview situations (compare Rastas 2005, 91).

"I saw you briefly on Obs on TV and I'd heard your name before. I had the idea that you were on the side of sex workers, that you'd give a bit of a different point of view on the issue." (I, Mimosa)

Another influential factor was my collaboration with the *Sihteeriopisto* website. **[103]** I was able to get an announcement about the study put on the homepage and on the chat forum for sex workers. There were discussions on the forum about my research and people who had taken part in the study urged others to do the same.

The second part of my empirical information is the discussion forum generated by sex workers. The internet provides a relatively secure and anonymous channel for obtaining clients. Alongside traditional brothel and street prostitution, a significant body of independent sex workers has grown up in the West that operates using the internet. (Murphy & Venkatesh 2006, 130.) This trend has emerged particularly rapidly in Finland, where the climate does not favour street work, brothels are illegal, communications technology is within almost everyone's reach and the educational level of sex workers is comparatively high.

Since 2003 there has been a closed discussion forum designed for sex workers that is run in connection with the Sihteeriopisto website. Apart from the website's administrator and myself, all those who use the forum are sex workers, and mainly Finnish women who sell sex on an independent basis. The forum works in many respects as a peer support network: participants post warnings about tricky clients, swap professional advice and beauty tips, standardize prices, organize joint activities, construct counter-identities, and deal with joys and sorrows. The group of active contributors is small, and they all know one another, hence there is no reason to suspect that those behind the pseudonyms are not genuine sex workers.

In 2006 I received my own username to access the forum. Before joining, I used the forum discussion without knowing the content, because, in line with established procedure, the administrator deleted the string of entries before I signed in. But a clear majority of users must have been in favour of me having user rights, otherwise I doubt I would have been given them.

In my first message, I introduced myself and described my study, so that from then on the others using the forum would know that on a certain level the forum was part of a research project. The majority of the material I drew on, however, was generated before 2006, purely for other purposes than research. When I wanted to quote texts directly, I first asked the writers' permission. Not all of them gave it.

There are plenty of articles on the role of the internet in the sex trade (Sharp & Earle 2003; Sanders 2005), but the empirical material they use has all been from open websites. The *Sex Worker Community* is a valuable resource for the researcher because sex workers themselves have chosen the subjects for discussion from their own standpoints. Many of the messages on the forum are written at the moment that actual problems are happening, for instance when waiting for a client who is late, or when a difficult client has just left. It is impossible to get such material in interviews.

In addition to interviews and the discussion forum, this study has drawn to some extent on sex workers' diary entries and other writings. I also kept a study diary and used one part of it directly here, and the section *Prostitution in Finland* draws on police investigation protocols.

I have changed the names of all sex workers I refer to in the empirical material. The interviewees chose their own pseudonyms, and I decided on the others. Some sex workers appear in the quotes under several names, in order to better safeguard their anonymity, and in some cases I have altered people's background details that are not essential to the study. In the interviews (I) verbatim sentences have been edited to be more readable by deleting some of the turns of phrase typical to the vernacular. But I have retained many in their original form. Square brackets are used for explanations when not apparent from the verbatim quotes or to refer to an action that is part of the speech, such as [laughs]. I have designated excerpts from the Forum by (F) and have added punctuation and capitals where necessary.

The empirical material of this study emphasizes the perspective of Finnish women who work as sex workers independently from home. The reason I have chosen them is that they obviously comprise the largest group of prostitutes in Finland, and it is likely that, as communications technology expands, selling sex using the internet will also become more widespread elsewhere. But also, this sex workers' "middle class" receives less attention in research than street, brothel and elite prostitution (however, Murphy & Venkatesh 2006, 131, 135; Whelehan 2001, 4-8).

Practically the entire span of sex work features in this material, but there are few sex workers represented who have no links whatsoever to commercial sex networks, due to the occasional nature of the work (e.g. students), lack of resources (e.g. people who are extremely marginalized socially) or whose freedom to operate is restricted (e.g. those working under pimps). The snowball method did not succeed in reaching them.

Studying groups that are far removed from academic culture is always a problem, but it is particularly difficult if your potential informants have strong grounds, because of their position on the fringes of society, to be suspicious of researchers. It can be hard to find people to interview but as Laura Agustín (2004, 5) points out, sex workers who agree to being interviewed also often say what they think the researcher wants to hear. Many of the classics in the field are based on analyses of texts other than those written by sex workers (e.g. Dworkin 1987; Jeffreys 1990).

During the course of this study, I continually came up against the issue of how to be sure that the sex workers were not lying to me, either consciously or without realizing it. I was not interested in the discursive features of the material I was gathering, but rather the content of message it conveyed. With some of the material quoted from prostitutes (e.g. Barry 1995, 69-70) one is even warned about believing what sex workers say, at least when they emphasize the positive significance of sex work.

Reality contains both subjective and objective substance. Speech is always interpretation. We colour, alter and select it as we suppose to be most appropriate to the receiver it is being conveyed to. In this respect, sex workers as narrators are the same as anyone else, and researchers should be able to take these sorts of boundary conditions into consideration using their social competence. Stories may be subjective, but in many ways they are bound to exterior reality. We cannot make selections between belief and non-belief but through the careful assessment of material. Interpretation acquires depth by examining the online discussion material and the research interviews in parallel.

We can heighten reliability by conducting consecutive interviews. A lengthy interview relationship and repeated interviews strengthen the confidentiality between interviewee and interviewer, and make it harder for distortions to be made wittingly. But the main advantage of serial interviews is that they give space to estimate the significance and permanence of interpretation in the description of experience. The interviewee does not only control information concerning herself, but also enhances it during the course of the interview (Gubrium & Holstein 2003b, 32-33). The interviewee's memory of certain experiences gains significance in each life situation.

In terms of interpreting the credibility of interviewees the biggest problem is to do with the strong preconceptions and manners of speech associated with sex work, whereby the sex workers who feature in my research material found it difficult to find the language that corresponded to experience, as indeed did I. Jo Doezema explains that because sex work is stigmatized, it is hard to give an interview that tallies with his experience:

"With most jobs, if you have a shitty day or a bad client or something, people don't immediately say that it's because of the kind of work you do and that you must stop right away. But with prostitution, I've always felt that if I didn't convince everybody that this work was fantastic for me and that I really loved it that they would all be on my back to quit." (Doezema, interviews Chapkis 1997, 120-121.)

The usual myths concerning commercial sex were conspicuously present in the interviews, and it is hard to say to what extent the interview situation, the debate in the media and the personality of the interviewer affected how sex work was talked about the way it was. We also have to bear in mind that as with life in general, the texts generated by sex workers may be contradictory in and among themselves, as if speaking at odds with themselves: the same sex worker may stress the importance of trust in professional ethics and then half an hour later say how she turned away a client who had driven hundreds of kilometres for an appointment.

On the other hand the social conventions of the interview require truthfulness (correspondence with reality) and honesty (correspondence with the speaker's feelings and intentions) (Hänninen 2000, 20, 25.) My understanding is that the interviewees took a serious attitude to my study and wanted to convey an image of their experiences that was as accurate as possible. It is worth approaching all empirical evidence critically, but there is no point in belittling the interviewee's evidence of her experiences simply because it conflicts with established notions.

In order to strengthen and develop my interpretations I insisted on following Paulo Friere's model in terms of involving sex workers and analysing the material they generated. Freire (2005, 121-130) sees participatory investigation as the democratic right of the subject of the investigation, in addition to being a tool for the researcher:

"Their contribution is both a right to which they are entitled and an indispensable aid to the analysis of the specialists. As co-investigators of the specialists, they will rectify and/or ratify the interpretations the latter make of the findings. From the methodological point of view, their participation gives the investigation (which from the beginning is based on a "sympathetic" relationship) an additional safeguard: the critical presence of representatives of the people [...]"**[104]**

The documented empirical material of this study is therefore based on the writings of and taped interviews with sex workers operating in Finland. Most of my contacts in the sex trade nevertheless remained undocumented or at most in note form because it was not always possible or appropriate to use a recorder (compare Penttinen 2008, 142). Even though there is no direct reference in this study to this time I spent with sex workers, it undoubtedly broadened my understanding of sex work and those who practice it. There was plenty of informal chat that accompanied the interview situations, but in addition I have for years discussed, celebrated, travelled, emailed, been politicized with and had coffee with a great many sex workers. When I realized how unreliable official sources were concerning commercial sex, I made it a habit to find and interview local sex workers (in London, Brussels, Barcelona, Tallinn, Amsterdam, Paris and Durban) whenever I travelled abroad. I was able to expand my international perspective by taking part in the conferences of the European sex workers' network in Belgium in 2005 and Bulgaria in 2007, and in 2005 I carried out a two-week stint of fieldwork in Stockholm.

References

1. Introduction

1. In interviews, 85% of clients of the Pro Centre of the greater Helsinki region had been doing sex work for five years or less. (Customer survey 2000, 7.)

2. I do not intend to get into a discussion about whether or not Mary Magdalene was a prostitute (Koivunen 1994, 275-276). The point is that in the 17th century, in particular, the Catholic Church presented her as a symbol of sin and corporeality, and at the same time she became a regular feature in religious painting.

3. Public health was also a context for controlling prostitution in Finland. Together with the Vagrancy Act it was used in the 19th and 20th centuries to justify the majority of tests on women known to be prostitutes for sexually transmitted diseases, their confinement to sexually transmitted disease and mental hospitals, imprisonment, and placement in care homes. During the 19th century, prostitutes were prohibited from raising their own or other people's children (Häkkinen 1995, 183). In addition, *there was scant legal protection for prostitutes. When Alli Huttulainen had the audacity to go to a police station on 2.11.1932 to report that she had been raped, she was held as a vagrant, dispatched for a sexually transmitted disease examination and issued with a caution by the Poor Relief Committee*. (Häkkinen 1995, 178.)

4. These studies have often in practice been oriented and linked to various educational projects. There are examples of these kinds of projects in all issues of the magazine *Research for Sex Workers* (http://www.nswp.org/r4sw/index.html).

5. Over time, promiscuity came to mean sexual irresponsibility and a lack of selectivity concerning one's sexual partners.

6. The strained relations among the disputants depict their mutual recrimination. The view of radical feminists is that "liberal feminists" act as "collaborationists" with pimps and the porn industry (Jeffreys 1990, 262), while sex radicals accuse radical feminists of being in league with the Pope (Rubin 1989, 302). The debate continues: US professors Chesler and Hughes (2004) demanded in the Finnish daily *Helsingin Sanomat* that the feminist movement abandon the liberal left and join forces with "conservatives and faith-based" groups in the struggle against prostitution. They criticize feminists for their lukewarm attitude to religion: "They all too often consider organized religion as just a pernicious form of patriarchy, when it can also be a legal and ethical system that benefits women." The writers believe that the problem with feminists is that "there are different views among them concerning what prostitution is: is it one type of work that should be legalized, or a violation of human rights that should be eliminated." The writers' own position is that "prostitution is an international human rights crisis, and feminists should confront it with moral clarity. We must see that prostitution is by its very nature harmful. We must actively oppose people who practice trading in women, pimps and men who frequent brothels."

7. Alice Echols calls the tendency cultural feminism, which is the term it is usually known by in Finland. More traditional radical feminism considers that the oppression of women emanates from the nuclear family, while for cultural feminists it is central to the porn industry: "The argument that 'pornography is the theory, rape the practice,' represents cultural feminism's contribution to the domino theory of sexuality." (Echols 1989, 58.) Cultural feminism is used widely in the literature, but because radical feminists distance themselves from the term (Lienert 1996) I do not use it in this context. The body of groups associated with the debate on commercial sex are also defined in other ways (e.g. Pendleton 1997, 81.)

8. But the relationship of anti-pornography radical feminists with the political right is complex. It is at least partly based on the experiences of pro-porn left (male) intellectuals in the 1960s and 1970s. (Dworkin & Wilson 1982, 28.)

9. In other words: "a woman-identified woman who does not fuck men. [...] Every act of penetration for a woman is an invasion which undermines her confidence and saps her strength. For a man it is an act of power and mastery which makes him stronger, not just over one woman but over all women. So every woman who engages in penetration bolsters the oppressor and reinforces the class power of men." (Leeds Revolutionary Feminist Group 1981.)

10. The dividing line here is not clear, and for instance Kathleen Barry classifies both tendencies variably. For an alternative classification see Sloan & Wahab 2000, 463.

11. In her early work Barry (1984, first edition 1979, 279) "in espousing individual liberty, we must not interfere with women who freely enter marriage and can leave it just as freely. Neither should we interfere with women who enter prostitution freely, be they self-employed professional call girls or high-status African prostitutes, as long as they can freely leave their work any time they choose. [...] The liberty that feminists are demanding for women must be granted to all, whether or not we agree with them." Barry later rejected this view (Barry 1995, 17.)

12. This is at least so of the Anglo-American region, which Zarz is apparently commenting on. The situation is more complex in the Roman Catholic countries of Central and Southern Europe, where prostitution is legal (with the backing of many conservative leaders) and has a place socially, even though prostitutes are also a stigmatized and controlled group.

13. Sloan & Wahabi (2000, 469) call revolutionary sex radicalism *Radical Sexual Pluralist Theory*.

14. I pay less attention to libertarian sex radicalism, because though the tendency was harshly argued against in the porn wars by both radical feminists and revolutionary sex radicals, I have not found any interventions in the academic debate that expound this category. Its critics also do not refer to examples of its writings, or, if they do, they use the term synonymously with all sex radicals. Libertarian thinking, however, is widely known from mass media discourse. An early classic in the genre is Gurley Brown's *Sex and the Single Girl*, which in the 1960s recommended emotionally uncommitted, polyamorous sex.

15. Raymond uses the work *liberal*, but I interpret him as meaning the same thing as Chapkis does by *libertarian*.

16. To my knowledge, Pheterson has never worked as a sex worker, but many sex workers have become sex work researchers – for example Eva Pendleton (Pendleton 1997, 80), Jill Naglesta (Nagle 1997, 2) and Jo Doezema (Chapkis 1997, 8). Conversely, some researchers have opted to try out sex work in connection with their research – for instance Wendy Chapkis (Chapkis 1997, 6) and Christine Mattley (Mattley 1998, 149). Tawnya Dudash (1997, 99), who was a striptease dancer and became a researcher says that many of the sex workers she interviewed agreed to join her study because they knew of her background in sex work. They felt disappointed by research studies and the image the media projects of them). The observations of protagonists in striptease work, which is less stigmatized, in research studies has become an established research method (Frank 2007, 507-508).

17. “To prostitute. To become a prostitute. Also defamatory.” (Uusi sivistyssanakirja 1991, [New Dictionary of Foreign Words]).

18. The online forum *Research for Sex Work* (http://www.nswp.org/r4sw/) is an annual webzine for sex workers, people in the health sector, researchers, third sector actors and others who deal with sex work-related issues. The webzine is published by the Global Network of Sex Work Projects.

19. According to the theory of social exchange, all social activity can be examined as terms of exchange, where people aim for advantages and avoid costs. The important difference between economic and other forms of exchange is the existence of formally agreed payments. (Laasanen 2006, 18.) The theory appears in everyday talk about prostitution when, for instance in connection with normalizing commercial sex it is claimed that the man always ends up having to pay, in one way or another. But in terms of my sex work research the term is irrelevant, because sex workers themselves appear not to find it hard to separate commercial and private sex from one another. By terms of exchange I refer here to the situation where two separate agents meet and embark of a contractual relationship that at least to some extent follows general market conditions. The precondition for trade is that apart from the fact that the things exchanged have a utilitarian value (they fulfil some human need) they have an exchange value (they carry a price). (Compare Kortteinen 1992, 329-330 & 342; on work terms of exchange see also Siltala 2004, 10-15.) Usually, one of the conditions of the terms of trade is considered to be the voluntariness of the parties involved. But as I argue later in this study, the boundary between coercion and voluntariness wavers (compare Kevätsalo 2008, 23).

20. In terms of my research, the concept of sex work is problematic, as it can mean almost anything related to any paid activity to do with sex. For example, by sex work SALLI, the sex professionals union (2004) “refers to business or work where the entrepreneur’s or worker’s sexual knowledge, sexual imagination or sexual skills are used to produce, provide or sell products or services having sexual significance for their customers.” Because of this, in some situations it is necessary to define sex work as prostitution. I also use the term prostitution with reference to a source in which its use has a particular significance.

2. Prostitution in Finland

21. This chapter is based on my published study of the same name (Kontula 2005), which examines the subject more thoroughly. It is difficult to gain an overall view of prostitution, even in a country the size of Finland, because prostitution refers to many parallel, interlocking and overlapping phenomena. Prostitution’s significant sub-areas are so closeted that the researcher only encounters faint traces of them. I have sought to verify the reliability of information from several sources and by calculating the origin of an informant’s facts. The principal rule was to find at least two independent sources for key arguments. But this has not always been possible.

22. Concerning this estimate, we should bear in mind that there is a rapid turnover in the numbers of people involved in certain forms of sex work, or in commercial sex overall. My estimate relates to the situation in 2005.

23. If sex workers arriving from the St Petersburg area (see following reference) spend two weeks in Finland on a tourist visa and during that time work every day, the calculation for the numbers in Finland at one time is 96. The figure increases when we include people who remain in Finland illegally and those who visit the country many times a year (Sillanpää 2005). On the other hand, not all spend two weeks in the country, and days when there are none are common.

24. Lehti & Aromaa 2002, 60-61. There are indications that this number decreased considerably after 2002. It is difficult to find apartments for effective pimping activity. Lehti and Aromaa’s report on the number of sex workers travelling from Murmansk to Finland gives an estimate of 300, but in more recent surveys (Skaffari & Urponen 2004, 56) the figure concerning Lapland has dropped to a fifth of that. Though the decrease in the south of the country may not be as dramatic, the trend is probably the same.

25. Each week, between 15-25 women from the Murmansk region go to Lapland, and between 20-25 applications for visas are made. Because the usual visiting period is a few days (Skaffari 2005), there are therefore between about 10-20 of these women in Finland at any one time. According to Skaffari and Urponen, a significant number of them travel in Finland for purposes other than prostitution. On this basis and relative to the estimate of the total number of people who visit to Finland to sell sex (see next reference), I estimate the number to be 10.

26. Skaffari & Urponen (2004, 56) estimate the numbers of women involved in prostitution who visit Finland from Murmansk to be about 20-60 women, and so the number in the table is the maximum.

27. Based on the annual assessment (see next reference).

28. Lehti & Aromaa 2002, 60-61. With prostitution from Estonia to Finland the same situation applies as for Russia, and the figure is the maximum possible estimate. Estonia’s EU membership, however, makes it easier to access the European sex market and eliminates the need for visas, which is why there were significant qualitative and qualitative differences in prostitution from Estonia to Finland circa 2005.

29. The estimate is based on conspicuous advertising (newspapers, magazines, internet) and both my own and Kivelä’s (2004) assessment of the numbers of Finnish professionals. The figure is also informed by the assessments from interviews with sex workers and from SALLI (Sirkiä 2004) of numbers of regular clients. The daily figure is calculated from the annual level, because full-timers take clients slightly more often than every other day, and because not all work throughout the year.

30. The estimate is based on conspicuous advertising (newspapers, magazines, internet) and both my own and Kivelä’s (2004) assessment of the numbers who are Russians and Estonians living in Finland. The figure takes account of Muuri’s (2004) and Kauppinen’s estimate of street prostitution in Helsinki and the adjusted proportion of Russians and Estonians in bar and pub prostitution. The daily estimate is reckoned to be higher than that for Finns, because as a rule the proportions of Russians and Estonians in non-specialized regular prostitution is emphasized and fees are lower, and so more clients attended to.

31. The figure for Thais who work full time as prostitutes is based on the assessment of specialists interviewed that Thai prostitution is located in massage parlours. According to the Business Information System of the National Board of Patents and Registration and the Tax Administration, there are about 60 such establishments in Finland. There are usually between one and two masseurs in each establishment, and almost all provide intimate massage, and often sexual services too. Some Thais (my estimate is 20, 10 per day) work in massage parlours only on a part-time basis, and they are accounted for in a later table. The total annual figure concerning Thais is therefore about 120.

32. The majority of people who sell sex on a part-time basis are Finns. It may be that they do some

other job full-time or that they sell sex to augment their unemployment benefit, study loans or pensions. All male hetero prostitutes belong to this category. Immigrants who live permanently in Finland are also included to some extent in the estimate. There is no certainty concerning the total numbers of people selling sex on an occasional basis, because their work is inconspicuous and focused on regular clients. Specialists and sex workers who have been interviewed agree that the amount of part-time sex selling is significant. This view is supported by Haavio-Mannila's and Kontula's (2003, 128) findings, according to which the majority of paid sex in Finland is for services provided by Finnish women. The annual figure presented in the table is therefore the minimum. The real figure is probably much bigger, but is unlikely to be significantly smaller.

33. Silfverberg & Kauppinen (1992, 24-25) group prostitutes according to degrees of professionalism on the basis of amateurs, part-timers and full-timers, where the amateurs mainly comprise Finns who are socially excluded and, at that time, the small amount of Estonian prostitution. Although all the forms of prostitution mentioned in the report still exist, their mutual relationship has altered to the extent that the distinctions are no longer relevant.

34. 'Company for afternoon coffee', the Finnish colloquialism for standard paid sex.

35. Female sex workers I interviewed who said they provide services to female clients described themselves as bisexual.

36. Prostitutes coming from Estonia to Finland who have been questioned by the police are on average 18-40 year-olds (Lehti & Aromaa 2002, 62-63 & Seuraaja 1 2005). On the other hand, Russian prostitutes in Lapland are on average 22-50 years old, nowadays generally closer to 40 (Skaffari & Urponen 2004, 58).

37. I call the forms of prostitution by the definitions that commercial sex operators most commonly use. This is not the case with the term *precision prostitution*. This is a fairly rare activity that does not go by a proper name "in the field".

38. Private = a small room or some such separate space where customers in erotic bars are offered private striptease performances. There are similar private spaces linked to many sex shops.

39. There has recently been a debate about marriages of convenience, where someone from abroad marries a Finn in order to get a residence permit. Elsewhere in Europe, sex work, migration and marriages of convenience are more clearly linked to one another. According to German legislation on foreigners, an immigrant is entitled to a residence and work permit only if his/her spouse is German or the citizen of another EU country. This is why many Thai sex workers marry Germans. In reality, the German spouses receive financial remuneration for the marriages, but couples do not live together. (Ruenkaew 2003, 119.)

40. At the time of writing this study, Finns mainly contracted HIV from abroad and from intravenous drug use in Finland. There is no comparable information on other sexually transmitted diseases, but the biggest numbers of infections are among younger age groups, where prostitution clientship is infrequent.

41. But, as is the case in many other countries (Breyer 1998, 183), dancers who work in sex businesses and erotic bars in Finland are often formally independent entrepreneurs who rent places for their performances from the owner of the premises. Though the owner determines the working conditions and prices, and in fact acts as an employer, dancers have no contractual rights and no possibility of professional organization.

42. The position is largely in line with that of the mass media, particularly in relation to "wage labour" prostitution. But at the same time it conflicts with the general idea that the wage labour relationship other than in commercial sex is natural and even a desirable form of work. It could be that automatically connecting pimping with exploitation binds us to a more culturally traditional notion of paid work. The basic assumption of Marx's thinking is that the value of a product derives from labour. Behind it lies the notion of natural law, according to which the entire value derived from labour belongs to the worker, whose antagonist in expropriating a portion of the value of the labour is the owner of capital. (Kortteinen 1992, 342-348.) Even though the idea later remained in the background in the market economy, prostitution is still perceived as this kind of labour.

43. Because of the standard of living gap across Finland's Eastern border, it is apparently worthwhile doing sex work in Finland even on worse terms. Almost all police interrogations of women in connection with pimping offences had been involved in prostitution in Finland several times before (Interrogation protocols 2003-2005). On the other hand, for those who often visit the country the risks of being caught are greater than for first-timers.

44. "For the purposes of this chapter, *sexual intercourse* refers to the sexual penetration, by a sex organ or directed at a sex organ, of the body of another. For the purposes of this chapter, a *sexual act* refers to an act the purpose of which is sexual arousal or satisfaction and which is sexually significant in view of the circumstances and the persons involved." Penal Code, Chapter 20, Section 10. Finlex

45. There is no legal protection concerning non-payment for prostitution or sexual services as a contravention of good practice (Hemmo 2003, 445-446). Sex workers usually get around the problem by taking payment in advance.

46. Aliens Act 378/1991, the grounds for refusal of entry into the country were amended by the law of 22 April 1999 whereby an addition was made to the grounds for refusal of entry based on the suspicion of selling sexual services. This amendment came into force on 1 May 1999. The current Aliens Act, 30 April 2004/301 contains the grounds for the refusal of entry in Section 148, which still contains the clause concerning suspicion of selling sexual services.

47. These do not deal separately with coercion, violence, threats, blackmail or rape as they are criminal offences regardless of their possible relation with commercial sex.

3. Stigma

48. Stigma refers to stigmata, the wounds left on the body of Jesus by his crucifixion. They usually appear only on the pious and acclaimed believers, and so are regarded as a positive label. On the other hand, the stigmata also refer to Jesus' fate for questioning norms and rejecting the world.

49. Durkheim differentiates in *The Division of Labour in Society* between law and custom and deals with crime expressly as infringements of law. Prostitution in Finland is only unofficially and indirectly sanctioned, but I consider it likewise. First, in Durkheim's analysis the characteristic feature of a penal code is that no separate grounds concerning the nature of a crime need to be given, as it concerns such a serious violation of the collective consciousness that all members of the community recognize it as a crime. The comparable position of prostitution is reflected by the fact that when I carried out research for this study I continually came across the belief that prostitution is illegal. Second, many of the sanctions that derive from the stigma of sex work are realized by way of the law, as almost all of the activities that surround prostitution (getting places to work, mobility, advertising, etc.) are at least partially

defined as crimes.

50. At the time of the interview, Christian Democrat MP Päivi Räsänen was a prominent advocate of the Christian anti-prostitution stance, voicing a strident demand for its criminalization.

51. Janice Raymond (1996, 242), on the other hand, argues against the idea that the victim viewpoint automatically signifies passivity. She considers the example of the German Jews, who were undeniably victims but whom we do not think of as objects: "It seems obvious that women can be victims of pornography and technological reproduction without depriving women of some ability to act under oppressive conditions. How else could any woman extract herself from these conditions, as many have?"

52. In Finland such prohibitions include a ban on advertising, the use of the Public Order Act to ban street prostitution (Sirkiä 2006), a ban on establishing cooperatives and problems in realizing the right to organization (see e.g. the statement of the Parliamentary Ombudsman Dnro 3989/4/5).

53. In Germany, for example, brothels are legal in principle, but they may not be set up near to a school or church.

54. There are also many other reasons for not paying tax, including the concern that one may be forced to continue working as a prostitute, despite wanting to quit, because of the problems of bureaucracy. See also the chapter on *Cost effectiveness* below.

55. There is also another feature that comes up repeatedly in the interviews – that sex workers are either only children or older than their siblings. The two of them who have older siblings, tell of "doing everything first" and "taking on the role of parent". But during the course of this study I could not find a convincing explanation for this similarity and for now will only mention it here.

56. It is likely that people with drug problems did not join the study because substance abuse problems are highlighted in types of sex work (e.g. bar prostitution) of which the sex workers in my research material have only limited experience. (Compare Hani & Henno 2007, 5).

57. The division into whores and non-whores is comprehensible only as an ideological distinction. According to this division, a heterosexual, married mother cannot be a prostitute, but in reality many sex workers are more likely to be mothers than non-prostitutes of the same age group who in their communities. And while they are less likely to be married than "respectable" women, they are as likely to have long-term relationships.

58. Prostitution is only a specific expression of the prostitution of the labourer. (Marx 1999, 76.)

4. Work

59. Prostitution belongs to the shadow economy, in which specific changes are in practice impossible to chart reliably. It is fairly unanimously reckoned at the moment, though, that prostitution has increased over the course of the past few decades (e.g. Gall 2006, 8-9).

60. Pasko also refers in her article to Hochschild's dichotomy of surface/deep acting, which differentiates between whether what is happening is deliberate acting or an effort to produce "really" the feelings demanded by emotional work. Pasko's division works as an analytical tool in the case of erotic dancers, but it does not fit my research material so well. While sex workers mention certain clearly superficial acted situations (fake orgasms), descriptions of most emotional work contain elements of both surface and deep acting.

61. These client "logs" can be found for instance at http://www.sexwork.net/forum/forumdisplay.php?f=12 It is likely that some have nothing to do with actual purchase situations, though the truthfulness of the writings is unimportant in terms of examining clients' judgments of sex workers' characteristics.

62. See, for example, Johanna's advice, http://www.sexpert.fi/palvelut/neuvonta/index.html.

63. Elsewhere, Hochschild (2003, 187) makes the point that increasing the autonomy of the employees can reduce the drawbacks of emotional work.

64. It has been estimated that the criminalization of clientship in Sweden is responsible for increasing the level of unprotected sex, as clients fear that condoms may be used as evidence of paying for sex (Bryngemark 2007, 50)

65. We find examples in Finnish history where peer support has worked better. Antti Häkkinen writes of prostitution at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century: *It is ironic that measures that the authorities used to try to crush prostitution had the opposite effect. Shelters, institutions and Hämeenlinna's women's prison became the cradles of subculture among prostitutes. It was in them that one learnt the professional skills of prostitution, made contacts, obtained advice about the best brothels and learnt about the procedures used by the police and justice system. Institutions of punishment became sorts of "centres of resistance"*. (Häkkinen 1995, 162.)

66. This is by no means a poor man's hobby, as sex workers apparently make their admirers buy a lot of sex. During this study, I met only a few whore addicts, but they were all senior salaried officials.

67. This is not entirely the case concerning HIV, which is also spread by intravenous drug use. According to Maria Nengeh Mensah (2006, 19), sex workers are exposed to HIV infection when, due to stigma for instance, they do not have the means, knowledge and power to protect themselves.

68. A significant percentage of sex workers who go to Western countries come from developing countries where the situation has only deteriorated because of the policies pursued by governments and directed by international development and funding organizations in recent decades (Bishop & Robinson 2003, 31). Conversely, in Finland during the 1980s, when income differences were relatively narrow, there was very little prostitution (Silfverberg & Kauppinen 1992). According to Julia O'Connel Davidson (1998, 71), unemployment and shortcomings in social security considerably increased underage prostitution in the UK at the beginning of the 1990s.

69. Traditionally, women artists and particularly actresses have been identified with prostitution. The Roman law on immunity enacted by Caesar Augustus did not encompass whores, brothel keepers and madams, and actresses, or their colleagues who were musicians and dancers. (Niiranen 1986, 481.) The artist, prostitute and porn star Veronica Vera (1995, 68) has commented sarcastically, "sex work has supported more artists than the NEA (National Endowment for the Arts)." On sex work as entrepreneurship see for example Pattanaik 2003, 312.

70. Taxing prostitutes is not a new phenomenon. In ancient Rome, the government kept a directory of prostitutes, who paid a daily tax per client (Niiranen 1986, 482). St Peters Basilica in Rome was partly built using revenue from prostitution (Benjamin & Masters 1964, 38). And so in Finland the view is that though prostitution, which is contrary to what is proper, cannot be considered a profession, in-

come from it must be taxed (Linnakangas 2005, 426-427).

71. At the time of finalizing this study, there was much talk in Finland about the lack of nursing staff, and such work was available on apparently reasonable terms. A few years ago, though, people from the health care sector who took up sex work included in their reasons for doing so that there was only temporary work available in their field.

72. The references in this section come from the Sihteeriopisto (sexwork.net) public forum, and so I use the original pseudonyms.

5. Sex

73. Primoratz criticizes the strict division of (bad) sex that does not involve love and (good) sex that does. Because the latter continues to be more highly esteemed, sex without love is not esteemed at all. He argues by way of comparison, that if we applied the same logic to food, the vast majority of people in the world would die of starvation, because it is extremely rare to have the opportunity to eat in the best restaurants. He is also strongly dubious of the myth, according to which having sex without love detracts from the ability to enjoy romantic sex.

74. On the other hand, Sheila Jeffreys (1990, 301-305), for example, distinguishes between "pleasure" and sexual excitement and the orgasm. She argues that even in subordinate and violent sex acts (which she reads as prostitution) a woman may have orgasms, which is bewildering because we do not have the cognitive equipment to comprehend sexually exciting situations that are devoid of pleasure. In her view, the eroticized sex of power relations cannot really be pleasurable for the person who is dominated (the woman) whether or not she has orgasms. Jeffrey's observation is important, but in light of my research her unqualified distinction does not prove reasonable.

75. The way those who have been selling sex for a longer time underscore the sexual aspect of the work may of course be due to the fact that those who remain in the trade find it preferable for reasons other than just financial ones. If the motive for doing sex work is to cover occasional expenses, it is perhaps irrelevant to go into greater depth about one's own sexuality.

76. Engels speaks of prostitution in his writings in two respects. First, particularly in writings in which he collaborated with Marx, prostitution appears as a broader metaphor for bourgeois society. Second, Engels writes of prostitution to some extent as a social problem. Although these writings came about as interventions in the political debate of the times, many of Engels' arguments are remarkably ahead of their times and have come up in the wider debate on prostitution only in recent decades.

77. Out of 25 interviewees, one, a male sex worker, judged that he was at times the underdog in the client relationship. The rest of my research material relates sex workers' experiences from a position of power. It may be that clients would portray paid sex in very different terms.

78. In addition to the interviews I have tested this by placing many ads for sexual services on the most popular contact websites. For example, an ad for a sex date during a weekend visit to a small town received 58 contacts. In theory, a sex worker would not manage to receive more than 20 clients during that period, and in practice the number rarely exceeds 10. (On the other hand, the concentration of prostitution in larger towns and cities may be because the stock of clients in smaller places is used to waiting for visiting sex workers, and the demand is not constantly this high.) It is notable that though the ad did not refer, in line with the website's rules, to the services being of a commercial nature, this was implicitly clear to all the callers.

79. In SM services, a power relationship favouring the seller may even be one of the factors attracting the client base. (O'Connel Davidson 1998, 93). Tiina and Camilla, who have much experience of domination, both believe that it is no coincidence that there are many people in important positions in society among their client base. They may have too much power, and so submitting to domination may balance things out. The professional dominatrix sells services based around erotic power games, which are usually referred to as SM (sadomasochism), D&S (dominance & submission) or B&D (bondage and discipline). Some dominatrixes may also take submissive roles, but as a rule it is the client who is submissive. Sessions usually require a certain amount of prior arrangement, and safety words are used. Typical features of an SM session include bondage, whipping, manipulating erogenous areas of the body painfully, training, cross dressing, role-playing and fetishism. Dominatrixes are usually in a better position than other sex workers, being more professionally and financially secure. (Highleyman 1997, 145.)

80. Sex workers interviewed by Tawnya Dudashin (1997, 106-107 & 115-116) also talked about how their power and control over their bodies has grown with sex work: "Once we realize that we do not have to 'take any shit' from customers, we recognize that we do not need to take it outside the theater either." One of the dancers she interviewed said that because the sex industry commodified her body, she realized that she owned it. Her body was not common property and therefore automatically at men's disposal.

81. Of course, sex in the non-commercial sphere is divided up into many cultures, but since the sex workers in my study make the separation in terms of paid sex based on experience, I do not think it is relevant to draw any fine distinctions in this respect.

82. And yet sex workers know – either from their own experience or from the mass media – that the risks associated with prostitution, such as violence, in reality exist in other sexual relations too, and therefore the impressions of the relative dangers of commercial sex are exaggerated.

83. It is in part precisely because of this opaqueness that sexual relations in many societies are normalized and institutionalized in the form of long-term marriages. It has been possible with Western dating culture to give short-term sexual relationships a controlled form. And some strains of Islam permit marriages of very short-duration (Murata 1986).

84. Though everyday prostitution may indeed be relatively exciting and exceptional work, it is further glorified and demonized by the myths associated with it. We may assume that following the break-up of the Soviet Union adventurism had an impact on the explosive growth of prostitution. At a time when regard for financial standing increased, yet the means to secure it were more unstable than ever, Western movies such as *Pretty Woman* depicted prostitution as a way of achieving a traditionally prized, 'good' marriage. Amidst the general rapture of liberation, sex work became momentarily socially acceptable, even desirable.

6. Control

85. This policy aimed at getting people out of sex work has been compared to Victorian charity work, where in practice 'saving Mary Magdalene's meant socially controlling poor women. Because sex workers are considered to be victims prone to risk, and not as subjects who seek to manage risk, attention gets paid to the needs for structural changes to society for re-training individuals for the formal labour market. (Scoular & O'Neill 2007, 566 & 770.)

86. In place of ‘regulationism’ Roth uses the word ‘liberalism’, but because regulationism is used most often as the counterpart to abolitionism in the debate on prostitution legislation (compare Agustín 2005, 683), I use it here. The confusion derives from the fact that within the feminist framework, the counterparts were perceived as radical feminism (which had previously supported abolitionism, and nowadays the form of it that criminalizes selling sex) and liberalism (which has generally demanded that selling sex be recognized as work). In the debate between regulationists and abolitionists, the former have used the term “liberals” pejoratively to mean people who permit all forms of prostitution in the name of individual freedom. In practice, legislative decisions taken on the basis of regulationism have rarely led to freedom of prostitution, at least with respect to sex workers, but more often to even stricter controls. For this reason we can conclude that regulationism and liberalism are not the same thing.

87. Jaana Kauppinen (2004) has also focused on how experience strengthens the ability of sex workers to identify and control safety risks. They are therefore more vulnerable at the outset of their careers or when their working environment and routines rapidly change.

88. This is a service that usually involves the sex workers performing together and prostitution services provided by one or both sellers.

89. The term *sex work* was first used in 1979 or in 1980 at a conference held in San Francisco. It was proposed by Carol Leigh, who worked as a sex worker and in the movement for prostitutes’ rights under the name Scarlot Harlot. She said the term was needed because it was necessary to embrace a new language that supported the agency of the stigmatized group. Sex work also underscores the common interests of the different areas of the sex industry and the nature of the activity as paid work. (Leigh 1997, 229-230.)

90. For example in the US (SWOP 2007) and Eastern Europe (SWAN 2007).

91. For example the World Sex Guide and the Sihteeriopisto website.

92. On the other hand, on this website all sex workers have the right to veto any texts that concern them. But this requires that one actively follows what is on the website and has some computer skills, which is not realistic in everyone’s case.

93. I do not take a position here on the historical accuracy of Bakhtin’s carnivalism. From the perspective of this study, it is important that we see Bakhtin’s concept of carnivalism as describing and elucidating the counter-culture developed by sex workers.

94. The red umbrella was first used as a symbol of sex workers in Vienna in 2001. This concerned a demonstration to draw attention to sex worker’s rights. (The Red Umbrella 2007, 60.)

95. The myth of sacred prostitution extends the history of prostitution to a time preceding agrarian society. In the beginning the gods were depicted as women and therefore contact with the spiritual world was under the control of women. When men little by little brought the leadership of the spiritual and profane under their own control, a distant echo of the old system was preserved in the form of temple prostitution. In Mesopotamia, priestesses held fairly high positions in society, and were accorded a special position because of their sexual energy. The prostitute possessed a healing and godlike power, which was “a combination of mother-love, tenderness, comfort, mystical enlightenment and sex.” (Roberts 1993, 1-5.) Kenneth Ray Stubbs (1994, 240-241) defines the holy prostitute as a teacher and healer, who through her action questions the dichotomy between the spirit (sacred) and the body (sin). This secret knowledge of the priestess myth is being renewed in sex workers’ movements for constructing a positive identity (Laliberté & St-Jean 2006, 43). The accounts of sex workers in Finland are nevertheless noticeably more prosaic, and few of them have come across the myth of sacred prostitution. Even when there is an understanding underlying one’s activity of sex as a sort of treatment, it is not associated with mental or spiritual ideas. And yet when they talk about experiencing stigma, some sex workers refer to Mary Magdalene, who is often held to be the heir to the goddesses of sexuality (Qualls-Corbett 1082, 149).

96. Veronica Vera (Feminism: ”Crunch Point” 1989, 148-149), who worked as a porn actor, regards the sex industry as a field in which women are enabled to obtain creative and financial power.

7. Summary

97. “Shitty jobs” does not refer to any specific work, rather to the way in which the jobs market is arranged. Certain strenuous service sector work is done for low pay, in poor conditions and under strict managerial control. The distaste sex workers feel for such work is not necessarily due to the work itself (cleaning, care, logistics, etc.), but to the conditions in which it is done. Selling sex can also be considered as particularly strenuous work, but in Finland the conditions in which it is done are, for some people, better than for more acceptable work.

98. Gorz’s thesis is that automation will crucially cut the need for industrial human labour. The opportunities are then opened up for developing autonomous activity and, on the other hand the threat of the “unemployed society”, in which people without wage labour are categorized and evaluated according to the logic of wage labour. He estimates that workers who do heteronymous work and identify with it will not be able to manage the transition, because their existence will be based on wage labour. For this reason he places his hopes in those who are left outside the wage labour system, the “non-class of non-workers”. The recent development of the labour market has proven Gorx’s assessment of 30 years ago to be mistaken. The disappearance of jobs in industry has not led to the disappearance of heteronomic labour, but to the expansion of capitalism in areas of immaterial production and having a service sector that is hard to automate. On the other hand, his claim that the trade union movement would be unwilling to expand the area of automated production appears to hold. In Finland, the spread of capitalism into new areas has supported the support by left-wing political parties of an “employment policy”, which idealizes “full employment” and strongly supports “job creation”. Keijo Rahkonen (1982, 12) has criticized Gorz’s idea that the struggle is limited to automated production. He believes that Gorz did not pay enough attention to how the capitalist rationale has the tendency to spread its factories further afield and that the autonomy of the automated sector is fundamentally dubious.

99. Katherine Frank (2007, 510) believes that as long as the cultural stigma does not alter, the same research result will succeed in catching us unawares again and again.

Appendix

100. For example, at this point I came across religious deliberations, which feature in an article on the moral understanding of sex workers (Kontula & Laakso 2007), almost by accident.

101. When I selected the core group I used certain technical criteria, the aims of which was to exclude those whose anonymity I could not guarantee. The group did not include any sex workers who had been in the media, nor anyone from my own circle of acquaintances. All members of the core group had

to know Finnish well enough to be able to comment on the text.

102. SALLI – United Sex Professionals of Finland (http://www.salli.org) is an organization that represents the interests of sex workers who operate in Finland, and seeks to promote the rights of sex workers, work safety, professional skills and, more broadly, the right of sexual autonomy.

103. Sihteeriopisto is Finland's only public online meeting point concerning prostitution. Sex can be sold and bought on almost all dating websites, but only indirectly under the protection of various code words and usernames.

104. Freire's model was developed for a large group of researchers to study rural ethnography in South America in the 1970s, and is therefore not directly applicable to Finnish urban sex work research. In addition, Freire's dialogics have a limit: his researcher-hero always appears from beyond the community being studied, presumably from the educated middle class. Tomperi and Suoranta (2005, 217) also point out that Freire pays no attention to the possibility of a project arising from within the community.

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105. It is difficult to put a figure on the total number of sex workers interrogated, because some of them deny that they sell sexual services. What I have done is to decide on the basis of other investigative information whether such denials are true or whether to include the individuals in the chart. There may therefore be errors in a few instances.

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Bionda. Opinion on the Sihteeriopisto [www.sihteeriopisto.net] discussion forum message board about the "negative side" 15.8.2005. (2.2.2008) In Finnish.

Directory of sex workers living in Finland refers to basic information I have collected from 2003-2005 on 41 people. The majority of them are Finns, but the group also includes nine foreign nationals who have permanent Finnish residence permits. In Finnish.

DMSC The Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee. [http://www.durbar.org/index.html] (1.3.2008)

Escort 1. Interview, Southern Finland, 4.1.2005. Escort 1 has for many years assisted and closely followed pimping arrangements in towns and cities in Southern Finland.

Escort 2. Interview, Southern Finland, 7.1.2005. Escort 2 has assisted and closely followed Thai massage businesses in several localities for about a year.

Escort 3. Interview, Southern Finland, 22.2.2005. Escort 3 has worked as a sex worker for over 10 years in Estonia.

FNV - [http://www.fnvbondgenoten.nl/fnvbondgenoten/english/] (1.3.2008)

Finlex – databank of Finnish legislation. [www.finlex.fi] (6.7.2008)

ICRSE - International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe. [http://www.sexworkeurope.org/site/] (1.12.2007)

Interrogation protocols. Between 2000-2004 the violent crimes unit of the Criminal Investigation Department interrogated 88 women who practice prostitution. **[105]** The crimes under investigation were usually pandering or aggravated pandering. They also included instances of blackmail, robbery, and one case of aggravated rape. The prostitutes were heard mainly as witnesses, but in some cases they were also suspects or complainants. Preliminary investigation protocols of the violent crimes unit of the Helsinki Police Department.

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6070/RVÄ/R/142274/02
6070/RVÄ/R/147257/02
6070/RVÄ/R/154226/02
6070/RVÄ/R/154235/02
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